

THE
TRAGEDIES
OF
SOPHOCLES,
FROM THE
GREEK;

By the Rev. THOMAS FRANCKLIN, M. A.
LATE
GREEK PROFESSOR in the University of
CAMBRIDGE.

VOL. II.



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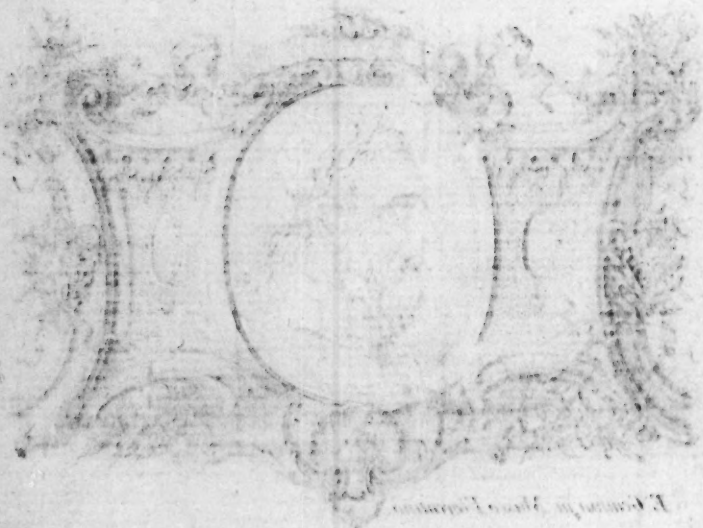
THE
 TRAJECTORIES
 OF
 SOPHOCLES

G. R. K.



By R. THOMAS WATKINS, M.A.
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Dramatis Personæ.

CÆSAR, King of Thibet.

EURYDICE, Wife of Cæsar.

ANTIGONE, Daughter of Oedipus.

ISMENE, Sister of Antigone.
A MESSANGER, GUARD, SERVANT AND ATTENDANTS.

Composed of numbers 1 to 1000.



Dramatis Personæ.

CREON, king of Thebes.

EURydICE, Wife of CREON.

HÆMON, Son of CREON.

ANTIGONE, Daughter of OEDIPUS.

ISMENE, Sister of ANTIGONE.

TIRESIAS, a prophet.

A MESSENGER, GUARD, SERVANT and ATTENDANTS.

CHORUS.

Composed of antient MEN of Thebes.



ANTIGONE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

ANTIGONE, ISMENE.

ANTIGONE.

O! My dear sister, my best-lov'd Ismene,
Is there an evil, by the wrath of Jove
Reserv'd for Oedipus' unhappy race,

VOL. II.

B

We

O! my dear sister, &c. Eteocles and Polynices, sons of the unfortunate Oedipus, having an equal claim to the kingdom of Thebes, had agreed to divide the power, and to reign year by year alternately; but Eteocles stepping first into the throne; and tasting the sweets of sovereignty, broke the contract, and maintained himself in the possession of his dominions. Polynices, in revenge, raised an army of Argians, and made an incursion on Thebes; a battle ensued, and after much slaughter on both sides, the brothers agreed to decide it by single combat; they fought, and were slain by each other. After the death of the brothers the kingdom of Thebes devolved to their uncle Creon, whose first act of supreme power was an edict forbidding all rites of sepulture to Polynices, as a traitor; and pronouncing instant death on any who should dare to bury him. Here the action of the tragedy commences, the subject of which is the piety of Antigone in opposition to the edict of Creon, with the distresses consequent upon it. The time and place are exactly marked out in the first scene, where Antigone calls her sister out of the palace into the adjoining area, to inform her of the decree which had been issued out on the preceding day, and her resolutions concerning it.

We have not felt already? sorrow and shame,
 And bitterness and anguish, all that's sad,
 All that's distressful hath been ours, and now
 This dreadful edict from the tyrant comes
 To double our misfortunes; hast thou heard
 What harsh commands he hath impos'd on all,
 Or art thou still to know what future ills
 Our foes have yet in store to make us wretched?

ISMENE.

Since that unhappy day, Antigone,
 When by each other's hand our brothers fell,
 And Greece dismiss'd her armies, I have heard
 Nought that cou'd give or joy or grief to me.

ANTIGONE.

I thought thou wert a stranger to the tidings,
 And therefore call'd thee forth, that here alone
 I might impart them to thee.

ISMENE.

O! what are they?

For something dreadful labours in thy breast.

ANTIGONE.

Know then, from Creon, our indulgent lord,
 Our hapless brothers met a different fate,
 To honour one, and one to infamy
 He hath consign'd; with fun'ral rites he grac'd

The

With fun'ral rites, &c. Of all the honours paid to the dead, the care of their funerals was looked upon by the antients as most necessary and indispensable; as to be deprived of sepulture, was accounted the greatest misfortune, and the highest injury. No imprecation was therefore so terrible as that any person might *ἀδατος* *ἐκτεταλιν* *χόρος*, 'die destitute of burial: it was not to be wondered at that they were thus solicitous about the interment of their dead,



ANTIGONE.

3

The body of our dear Eteocles,
 Whilst Polynices' wretched carcase lyes
 Unbury'd, unlamented, left expos'd
 A feast for hungry vultures on the plain;
 No pitying friend will dare to violate
 The tyrant's harsh command, for public death
 Awaits th' offender; Creon comes himself
 To tell us of it, such is our condition;
 This is the crisis, this the hour, Ismene,
 That must declare thee worthy of thy birth,
 Or shew thee mean, base, and degenerate.

ISMENE.

What woud'st thou have me do? defy his pow'r?
 Contemn the laws?

B 2

ANTI-

dead, when they were strongly possessed with the opinion that the souls of the deceased could not be admitted into the Elysian shades, but were forced to wander desolate and alone, till their bodies were committed to the earth. Nor was it sufficient to be honoured with the solemn performance of their funeral rites, except their bodies were prepared for burial by their relations, and interred in the sepulchres of their fathers; we must not therefore be surprized to find the whole play of Antigone turning on this single incident; for though the burial of a dead body would make but an indifferent foundation for a modern tragedy, it is a subject of dignity and importance, and highly suitable to the notions and genius of antiquity.

Unlamented. This was the judgment which God denounced against Jehoiakim, king of Judah: 'they shall not lament for him, saying, ah! my brother, or ah! sister; they shall not lament for him, saying, ah! lord, or ah! his glory; he shall be buried with the burial of an ass, &c. Jerem. xxii. v. 18, 19. The customs and manners of the Greeks were originally drawn from the eastern nations, which accounts for the similitude so observable in Sophocles and other heathen writers with some parts of holy writ.

ANTIGONE.

ANTIGONE.

To act with me, or not:

Consider and resolve.

ISMENE.

What daring deed

Woud'st thou attempt? what is it? speak.

ANTIGONE.

To join

And take the body, my Ismene.

ISMENE.

Ha!

And woud'st thou dare to bury it, when thus

We are forbidden?

ANTIGONE.

Ay, to bury HIM;

He is my brother, and thine too, Ismene;

Therefore consent or not, I have determin'd

I'll not disgrace my birth.

ISMENE.

Hath not the king

Pronounc'd it death to all?

ANTIGONE.

He hath no right,

No pow'r to keep me from my own.

ISMENE.

Alas!

Remember our unhappy father's fate,

His

Consent or not, &c. The characters of Antigone and Ismene are an exact counterpart to those of Electra and Chrysothemis; the fierceness and resolution of the one is contrasted by the softness and timidity of the other. The sentiments are nearly the same throughout, and indeed, the similitude of circumstances considered, this was almost unavoidable.

His eyes torn out by his own fatal hand,
Oppress'd with shame and infamy he dy'd;
Fruit of his crimes! a mother, and a wife,
Dreadful alliance! self-devoted, fell;
And last, in one sad day, Eteocles
And Polynices by each other slain,
Left as we are, deserted and forlorn,
What from our disobedience can we hope
But misery and ruin? poor weak women,
Helpless, nor form'd by nature to contend
With powerful man; we are his subjects too;
Therefore to this, and worse than this, my sister,
We must submit; for me, in humblest pray'r
Will I address me to th' infernal pow'rs
For pardon of that crime which well they know
Sprang from necessity, and then obey;
Since to attempt what we can never hope
To execute, is folly all and madness.

A N T I G O N E.

Wert thou to proffer what I do not ask,
Thy poor assistance, I wou'd scorn it now:
Act as thou wilt; I'll bury him myself;
Let me perform but that, and death is welcome:
I'll do the pious deed, and lay me down
By my dear brother; loving and belov'd
We'll rest together: to the pow'rs below,
'Tis fit we pay obedience; longer there
We must remain, than we can breathe on earth,
There I shall dwell for ever; thou, mean time,
What the gods hold most precious may'st despise.

I S M E N E.

I reverence the gods; but, in defiance

Of laws, and unassisted to do this,
It were most dang'rous.

ANTIGONE.

That be thy excuse.

Whilst I prepare the fun'ral pile.

ISMENE.

Alas!

I tremble for thee.

ANTIGONE.

I tremble for thee, &c. The Antigone of Rotrou, an old French poet, whom Brumoy calls Corneille's master, is a pretty exact copy, and in many parts an almost literal translation of Sophocles; it seems to be written with spirit, as the reader will see by the following quotation.

ISMEN. Ah, que vous me causez une frayeur extrême!

ANTIG. Ne m'épouvantez pas, & tremblez sur vous-même.

ISMEN. Soyez secrette au moins, comme je vous promets
Que par moi ce dessein ne se sçaura jamais.

ANTIG. Si rien est à cacher, cachez votre foiblesse,
Je fais gloire pour moi que ma vertu paroisse.

ISMEN. Comme dans les dangers vous vous précipitez!

ANTIG. Avec autant d'ardeur que vous les évitez.

ISMEN. Je vous l'ai dit cent fois, cette œuvre sera vaine.

ANTIG. Bien, mon pouvoir cessant fera cesser ma peine.

ISMEN. Mais ce n'est pas assez d'entreprendre ardemment;
L'honneur de l'entreprise est en l'événement.

ANTIG. Vos raisons, comme vous, sont de si peu de force.

Que, loin de m'arrêter, cet obstacle m'amorce,

Laissez indifférent mon bon ou mauvais sort;

Voyez, si je pérís, mon naufrage du port.

Pour moi je tiens plus chère & plus digne d'envie

Une honorable mort qu'une honteuse vie;

Et

ANTIGONE.

7

ANTIGONE.

Tremble for thyself,

And not for me.

O! do not tell thy purpose,
I beg thee, do not; I shall ne'er betray thee.

ANTIGONE.

I'd have it known; and I shall hate thee more
For thy concealment, than, if loud to all,
Thou woud'st proclaim the deed.

ISMENE.

Thou hast a heart
Too daring, and ill-suited to thy fate.

ANTIGONE.

I know my duty, and I'll pay it there
Where 'twill be best accepted.

ISMENE.

Coud'st thou do it;
But 'tis not in thy pow'r.

ANTIGONE.

When I know that
It will be time enough to quit my purpose.

ISMENE.

It cannot be; 'tis folly to attempt it.

ANTIGONE.

Go on, and I shall hate thee; our dead brother,
He too shall hate thee as his bitt' rest foe;
Go, leave me here to suffer for my rashness;

B 4

Whate'er

Et de mes ans enfin voir terminer le cours
Ne sera qu'arriver où je vais tous les jours.

ISMEN. Allez donc: que le Ciel pour vous & pour mon frere
Conduise ce dessein mieux que je ne l'espere;
Mais vos soins, si mon cœur ne m'abuse aujourd'hui,
Préparent un cercueil plus pour vous que pour lui.

Whate'er befalls, it cannot be so dreadful
As not to dye with honour.

I S M E N E.

Then farewell,
Since thou wilt have it so; and know, I smene
Pities thy weakness, but admires thy virtue.

[Exeunt.

S C E N E II.

CHORUS.

S T R O P H E I.

By Dirce's sweetly-flowing stream,
Ne'er did the golden eye of day
On Thebes with fairer lustre beam,
Or shine with more auspicious ray.
See, the proud Argive with his silver shield,
And glitt'ring armour quits the hostile plain;
No longer dares maintain the luckless field,
But vanquish'd flies, nor checks the loosen'd rein.
With dreadful clangor, like the bird of Jove,
On snowy wings descending from above,

His

By Dirce's sweetly-flowing stream, &c. The kingdom of Thebes, which had been torn to pieces by the dissention of the two brothers, being at length by their deaths restored to peace and tranquility, the principal and most antient inhabitants, who form the chorus, are brought together with the utmost propriety to sing a song of triumph on the occasion: as they are the friends and counsellors of Creon, we find them condemning Polynices as author of the war, and rejoicing in his defeat. George Rataller, the only Latin translator who has ever done justice to Sophocles, has turn'd this noble chorus into a good sapphic ode:

With dreadful clangor, &c. Ratallerus renders it thus,

Ut Jovis summo veniens olympos

Armiger

His vaunted pow'rs to this devoted land
 In bitt'rest wrath did Polynices lead,
 With crested helmets, and a num'rous band
 He came, and fondly hop'd that Thebes shou'd bleed.

ANTISTROPHE I.

High on the lofty tow'r he stood,
 And view'd th' encircled gates below,
 With spears that thirsted for our blood,
 And seem'd to scorn th' unequal foe;
 But fraught with vengeance, e'er the rising flame
 Cou'd waste our bulwarks, or our walls surround,
 Mars to assist the fiery serpent came,

And

Armiger plumis coopertus albis,
 Devolat, latè strepitug; acuto

Æthera complet.

Constitit celsæ super arcis ædes,
 Ense munitus, galeâq; & armis,
 Undequaque hastis inhiabat urbi

Sanguine tinctis.

Victus at fugit trepidè, priusquam
 Posset insanas satiare fauces,
 Et nimis nostro cupidum cruore

Tingere guttur.

The fiery serpent, &c. By the dragon or fiery serpent, we are to understand the Theban army attack'd by the eagle Polynices. The scholiasts, who are always full of whimsical conjectures, will needs have it that the Thebans are here call'd serpents as descendants of Draco, the son of Mars and Tilphosa, or, as the sons of Cadmus, who sow'd the serpent's teeth that sprung up into armed men, as related in the third book of Ovid's metamorphoses; though it is, after all, most probable that Sophocles meant no more than a comparison of the two armies with creatures of most remarkable enmity to each other, in imitation of his great master Homer, who has made use of this very image on a similar occasion. See Iliad, b. 14, v. 201, with an imitation of it by Virgil, Æn. b. 11. v. 751.

And brought the tow'ring eagle to the ground.
 That god who hates the boastings of the proud,
 Saw the rude violence of th' exulting croud;
 Already now the triumph was prepar'd,
 The wreath of vict'ry, and the festal song,
 When Jove the clash of golden armour heard,
 And hurl'd his thunder on the guilty throng.

STROPHE II.

Then Capaneus, elate with pride,
 Fierce as the rapid whirlwind came,
 Eager he seem'd on ev'ry side
 To spread the all-devouring flame;
 But soon he felt the winged light'ning's blast,
 By angry heav'n with speedy vengeance sent,
 Down from the lofty turrets headlong cast,
 For his foul crimes he met the punishment.
 Each at his gate, long time the leaders strove,
 Then fled, and left their arms to conqu'ring Jove;
 Save the unhappy death-devoted pair,
 The wretched brethren, who unconquer'd stood,

With

That god who hates, &c. ΦΙΛΕΙ ὁ Θεός (says Herodotus) τὰ ὑπερχύοντα πάντα κόλλειν, 'God loveth to cut off every thing 'that is proud;' agreeable to which is the sentiment of the holy psalmist, 'The Lord preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.' Psalm xxxi. v. 19.

Then Capaneus, &c. Capaneus was one of the seven captains who came against Thebes: after he had mounted to the top of the κλιμακες, or scaling ladders, he was beat down with stones and slain; which gave the poets an opportunity of reporting him to have been struck dead with lightning. Statius calls him, 'superum contemptor,' 'a contemner of the gods.'

Each at his gate, &c. The Greek is, the seven leaders stood at the seven gates.

ANTIGONE.

11

With ranc'rous hate inspir'd, and fell despair,
They reek'd their vengeance in each other's blood.

ANTISTROPHE II.

And lo! with smiles propitious see

To Thebes, for num'rous carrs renown'd,

The goddess comes, fair victory,

With fame and endless glory crown'd!

Henceforth, no longer vex'd by war's alarms,

Let all our sorrows, all our labours cease;

Come, let us quit the din of ratt'ling arms,

And fill our temples with the songs of peace.

The god of Thebes shall guide our steps aright,

And crown with many a lay the festive night.

But see, still anxious for his native land,

Our king, Menæceus' valiant son appear;

With some fair omen by the gods command

He comes to meet his aged council here.

[Exeunt.

A C T II.

S C E N E I.

CREON, CHORUS.

CREON.

AT length our empire, shook by civil broils,
The gods to peace and safety have restor'd;
Wherefore, my friends, you had our late request
That you shou'd meet us here; for well I know
Your firm allegiance to great Laius, next
To OEdipus, and his unhappy sons;
These by each other's hand untimely slain,
To me the sceptre doth of right descend,

As

As next in blood: never can man be known,
 His mind, his will, his passions ne'er appear
 Till pow'r and office call them forth; for me,
 'Tis my firm thought, and I have held it ever,
 That he who rules and doth not follow that
 Which wisdom counsels, but restrain'd by fear
 Shuts up his lips, must be the worst of men;
 Nor do I deem him worthy who prefers
 A friend, how dear soever, to his country.
 Shou'd I behold (witness all-seeing Jove)
 This city wrong'd, I never wou'd be silent,
 Never wou'd make the foe of Thebes my friend,
 For on her safety must depend our own;
 And if she flourish we can never want
 Assistance or support: thus wou'd I act,
 And therefore have I sent my edict forth
 Touching the sons of OEdipus, commanding
 That they shou'd bury him who nobly fought
 And dy'd for Thebes, the good Eteocles,
 Gracing his mem'ry with each honour due
 To the illustrious deed; for Polynices,
 Abandon'd exile, for a brother's blood
 Thirsting insatiate, he who wou'd in flames
 Have wasted all, his country, and his gods,
 And made you slaves, I have decreed he lye
 Unburied, his vile carcase to the birds
 And hungry dogs a prey, there let him rot
 Inglorious, 'tis my will; for ne'er from me
 Shall vice inherit virtue's due reward,
 But him alone who is a friend to Thebes,
 Living

Him alone, &c. Creon, conscious to himself that the edict forbid-
 ing the burial of Polynices must be highly unpopular, and would prob-
 ably

Living or dead shall Creon rev'rence still.

CHORUS.

Son of Menæceus, 'twas thy great behest
Thus to reward them both; thine is the pow'r
O'er all supreme, the living and the dead.

CREON.

Be careful then my orders are obey'd.

CHORUS.

O! fir, to younger hands commit the task.

CREON.

I have appointed some to watch the body.

CHORUS.

What then remains for us?

CREON.

To see that none

By your connivance violate the law.

CHO.

bably be construed by his subjects as an act of arbitrary power, calls a council of the principal and most antient inhabitants of Thebes, to whom he artfully represents his conduct, not as the effect of private resentment, but of his zealous regard for the public welfare; and as he was apprehensive that the friends of Polynices would, in spite of all his precautions, bury the body, he prepares them for that severity with which he had resolved to treat the offender. The council, we may observe, is composed of slaves, who are obliged to assent to what they could not approve, and submit to orders which they could not resist. By this lively representation of the evils and miseries of an arbitrary government, the poet pays an oblique compliment to his countrymen the Athenians, who would naturally take a pleasure in comparing it with the freedom and happiness of their own. The chorus, according to Horace, should indeed always appear as the friends of distress'd virtue; but in this case Sophocles, we see, is excusable, as it could not be done, considering whom they are composed of, with any degree of propriety.

CHORUS.

Scarce will the man be found so fond of death
As to attempt it.

CREON.

Death is the reward
Of him who dares it; but oft times by hope
Of fordid gain are men betray'd to ruin.

SCENE II.

MESSENGER, CREON, CHORUS.

MESSENGER.

O! king, I cannot boast, that hither sent
I came with speed, for oft my troubled thoughts
Have driv'n me back; oft to myself I said,
Why dost thou seek destruction? yet again
If thou report it not, from other tongues
Creon must hear the tale; and thou wilt suffer:
With doubts like these oppress'd, slowly I came,
And the short way seem'd like a tedious journey;
At length I come, resolv'd to tell thee all:
Whate'er th' event, I must submit to fate.

CREON.

Whence are thy fears, and why this hesitation?

MESSENGER.

First for myself; I merit not thy wrath;
It was not I, nor have I seen the man
Who did the guilty deed.

It

First for myself, &c. The servant in Terence prefaces his tale
with the like formality;

Here, primum te arbitrari quod res est velim,
Quicquid hujus factum est, culpa non factum est mea.

ANTIGONE.

15

CREON.

Something of weight

Thou hast t' impart, by this unusual care
To guard thee from our anger.

MESSENGER.

Fear will come

Where danger is.

CREON.

Speak, and thou hast thy pardon.

MESSENGER.

The body of Polynices some rash hand
Hath bury'd, scatter'd o'er his corps the dust,
And fun'ral rites perform'd.

CREON.

Who dar'd do this?

MESSENGER.

'Tis yet unknown; no mark of instrument
Is left behind; the earth still level all,
Nor worn by track of chariot wheel; the guard,
Who watch'd that day, call it a miracle;
No tomb was rais'd; light lay the scatter'd earth,
As only meant t' avoid th' imputed curse;
Nor cou'd we trace the steps of dog or beast
Passing that way; instant a tumult rose,

The

As only meant, &c. In Greece the person was look'd on as accursed, and guilty of the greatest inhumanity, who pass'd by an unburied corps without casting dust or soft earth upon it, which in cases of necessity was considered as sufficient to gain the ghost's admission into Pluto's dominions; travellers, therefore, though in ever so much haste, if they met with a dead body, thought it their duty to sprinkle it three times in this manner. The custom is alluded to by Horace.

Quamquam festinas, non est mora longa, licebit

Injecto ter pulvere, curas.

Lib. 1. od. 28.

The guards accus'd each other ; nought was prov'd,
 But each suspected each, and all deny'd,
 Off'ring in proof of innocence to grasp
 The burning steel, to walk thro' fire, and take
 Their solemn oath they knew not of the deed ;
 At length, one mightier than the rest, propos'd
 (Nor cou'd we think of better means) that all
 Shou'd be to thee discover'd ; 'twas my lot
 To bring th' unwelcome tidings, and I come
 To pour my news unwilling into ears
 Unwilling to receive it, for I know
 None ever lov'd the messenger of ill.

C H O R U S.

To me it seems as if the hand of heav'n
 Were in this deed.

C R E O N.

Be silent, e'er my rage,
 Thou rash old man, pronounce thee fool and dotard ;
 Horrid suggestion ! think'st thou then, the gods
 Take care of men like these ? wou'd they preserve,
 Or honour him who came to burn their altars,
 Profane their rites, and trample on their laws ?

Will

To grasp the burning steel. It was usual, in antient Greece, for persons accused of any considerable crime to clear themselves from the imputation, by taking a solemn oath that they were not guilty of it, at the same time holding in their hands a red hot iron called *Muspos*, which, if they expressed no sense of pain, was admitted as a sufficient proof of their innocence.

To walk thro' fire. This method of clearing themselves is exactly similar to our Saxon custom of purgation by fire-ordeal, wherein the person accused passed blindfold and barefooted over red-hot plough shares. This is said to have been performed by Emma, the mother of Edward the confessor, to vindicate her honour from the scandal of incontinency with Alwyn, bishop of Winchester.

Will they reward the bad? it cannot be :
 But well I know, the murm'ring citizens
 Brook'd not our mandate, shook their heads in secret,
 And ill-affected to me, wou'd not stoop
 Their haughty crests, or bend beneath my yoke ;
 By hire corrupted, some of these have dar'd
 The vent'rous deed : gold is the worst of ills
 That ever plagu'd mankind ; this wastes our cities,
 Drives forth their natives to a foreign soil,
 Taints the pure heart, and turns the virtuous mind
 To basest deeds ; artificer of fraud
 Supreme, and source of ev'ry wickedness :
 The wretch corrupted for this hateful purpose
 Must one day suffer ; for, observe me well,
 As I revere that pow'r by whom I swear,
 Almighty Jove, if you conceal him from me,
 If to my eyes you do not bring the traitor,
 Know, death alone shall not suffice to glut
 My vengeance ; living shall you hang in torments
 Till you confess, till you have learn'd from me
 There is a profit not to be desir'd,
 And own, dishonest gains have ruin'd more
 Than they have sav'd.

M E S S E N G E R.

O! king, may I depart,

Or wait thy further orders?

C R E O N.

Know'st thou not

Thy speech is hateful? hence.

M E S S E N G E R.

Wherefore, my lord?

C R E O N.

Know you not why?

ANTIGONE.

MESSENGER.

I but offend your ear,
They who have done the deed afflict your soul.

CREON.

Away; thy talk but makes thy guilt appear.

MESSENGER.

My lord, I did not do it.

CREON.

Thou hast sold

Thy life for gain.

MESSENGER.

'Tis cruel to suspect me.

CREON.

Thou talk'st it bravely; but remember all,
Unless you do produce him, you shall find
The mis'ries which on ill-got wealth await.

Exit.

MESSENGER.

Wou'd he were found! that we must leave to fate;
Be't as it may, I never will return;
Thus safe beyond my hopes, 'tis fit I pay
My thanks to the kind gods who have preserv'd me.

Exit.

SCENE III.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Since first this active world began.
Nature is busy all in ev'ry part;

But

Since first this, &c. This intermede, or song of the chorus, seems
to have less connection with the subject of the tragedy, than per-
haps

A N T I G O N E.

19

But passing all in wisdom and in art,

Superior shines inventive man :

Fearless of wint'ry winds, and circling waves,

He rides the ocean, and the tempest braves ;

On him unweary'd earth with lavish hand,

Immortal goddess, all her bounty pours,

Patient beneath the rigid plough's command,

Year after year she yields her plenteous stores.

A N T I S T R O P H E I.

To drive the natives of the wood

From their rude haunts, or in the cruel snare,

To catch the wing'd inhabitants of air,

Or trap the scaly brood ;

To tame the fiery courser yet unbroke

With the hard rein, or to the untry'd yoke

To bend the mountain bull, who wildly free

O'er the steep rocks had wander'd unconfin'd ;

These are the arts of mortal industry,

And such the subtle pow'r of human kind.

S T R O P H E II.

By learning, and fair science crown'd,

Behold him now full-fraught with wisdom's lore,

The laws of nature anxious to explore,

With depth of thought profound.

C 2

But

haps any other in Sophocles ; it describes the extensive range of human science, and its application to good or evil purposes, according to the dispositions of men. ' Cette morale (says Brumoy) tombe sur le pretendu coupable, qui a eu l'adresse de rendre les derniers devoirs à Polynice, malgré l'attention des gardes, sans pouvoir toutefois éviter le supplice qui l'attend.' But surely the refinement of French criticism is required to discover an allusion so distant : the ode however abounds in fine sentiment and expression, and if not necessary to the business may, at least, be considered as an agreeable ornament to the drama.

But nought alas ! can human wisdom see
In the dark bosom of futurity.

The pow'r of wisdom may awhile prevail,
Awhile suspend a mortal's fleeting breath,
But never can her fruitless arts avail

To conquer fate, or stop the hand of death.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Man's ever-active changeful will
Sometimes to good shall bend his virtuous mind,
Sometimes behold him to foul deeds inclin'd,
And prone to ev'ry ill.

Who guiltless keeps the laws is still approv'd
By ev'ry tongue, and by his country lov'd ;

But he who doth not, from his native land

A wretched exile, far, O ! far from me

May he be driv'n, by angry heav'n's command,

And live devote to shame and infamy !

CHORUS.

Amazement ! can it be Antigone,

Or do my eyes deceive me ! no, she comes.

O ! wretched daughter of a wretched father,

Hast thou transgress'd the laws, and art thou ta'en

In this advent'rous deed, unhappy maid ?

SCENE

Far, O ! far from me, &c. The Greek is *μὴ τῷ μοι παρῆστιος γένωιτο*, 'ne mecum habitet,' 'let not such a one live under the
'same roof with me.' Vetabo, says Horace,

-----sub iisdem

Sit trabibus, fragilemve mecum

Solvat Phaselum.

Lib. 3. od. 2.

S C E N E IV.

ANTIGONE, GUARD, CHORUS.

GUARD.

Behold the woman who hath done the deed ;
I'th' very act of burial we surpriz'd her.
Where is the king ?

CHORUS.

Return'd as we cou'd wish ;
Ev'n now he comes this way.

S C E N E V.

CREON, ANTIGONE, GUARD, CHORUS.

CREON.

Whom have we here ?
Doth justice smile upon us ?

GUARD.

O ! my lord,
Never shou'd man too confident assert,
Much less by oath shou'd bind himself to aught,
For soon our judgments change, and one opinion
Destroys another ; by thy threats alarm'd
But now, I vow'd I never wou'd return,
Yet thus preserv'd, beyond my hopes, I come
Bound by that duty which I owe to thee
And to my country, to bring here this virgin,
Whom, as she sprinkled o'er her brother's dust
The vary'd wreath, we seiz'd ; the willing task
Was mine, nor as of late by lot determin'd.
Receive her then, O ! king, judge and condemn

The guilty, as it best becomes thy wisdom;
Henceforth I stand acquitted.

CREON.

But say how,
Where did'st thou find her?

GUARD.

To say all, 'twas she
Who buried Polynices.

CREON.

Art thou sure?

GUARD.

These eyes beheld her.

CREON.

But say, how discover'd

GUARD.

Thus then it was; no sooner had I left thee
Than mindful of thy wrath, with careful hands
From off the putrid carcase we remov'd
The scatter'd dust, then to avoid the stench,
Exhaling noisome, to a hill retir'd;
There watch'd at distance, till the mid-day sun
Scorch'd o'er our heads; sudden a storm arose,
Shook every leaf, and rattled thro' the grove,
Filling the troubled element; we clos'd
Our eyes, and patient bore the wrath of heav'n:
At length the tempest ceas'd; when we beheld
This virgin issuing forth, and heard her cries
Distressful, like the plaintive bird who views
The plunder'd nest, and mourns her ravish'd young;
Ev'n thus the maid, when on the naked corse
She cast her eyes, loud shriek'd, and curs'd the hand
That did the impious deed, then sprinkled o'er
The crumbled earth, and from a brazen urn

Of

Of richest work to the lov'd relics thrice
Her due libations pour'd ; we saw, and strait
Pursu'd her ; unappall'd she seem'd, and still
As we did question her, confess'd it all.
It pleas'd, and yet methought it griev'd me too.
To find ourselves releas'd from woe is bliss
Supreme, but thus to see our friends unhappy
Embitters all ; I must be thankful still
For my own safety, which I hold most dear.

CREON.

Speak thou, who bend'st to earth thy drooping head ;
Dost thou deny the fact ?

ANTIGONE.

Deny it ? no :

'Twas I.

CREON. [to the guard.

Retire, for thou art free, and now [turning to Ant.
Be brief, and tell me ; heard'st thou our decree ?

ANTIGONE.

I did ; 'twas public ; how cou'd I avoid it ?

CREON.

And dar'st thou then to disobey the law ?

ANTIGONE.

I had it not from Jove, nor the just gods
Who rule below ; nor cou'd I ever think
A mortal's law of pow'r or strength sufficient
To abrogate th' unwritten law divine,
Immutable, eternal, not like these
Of yesterday, but made e'er time began.
Shall man persuade me then to violate
Heav'n's great commands, and make the gods my foes ?
Without thy mandate, death had one day come ;
For who shall 'scape it ? and if now I fall

C 4

A little

A little sooner, 'tis the thing I wish.
 To those who live in misery like me,
 Believe me, king, 'tis happiness to dye;
 Without remorse I shall embrace my fate;
 But to my brother had I left the rites
 Of sepulture unpaid, I then indeed
 Had been most wretched; this to thee may seem
 Madness and folly; if it be, 'tis fit
 I shou'd act thus, it but resembles thee.

CREON.

Sprung from a fire perverse and obstinate,
 Like him, she cannot bend beneath misfortune;
 But know, the proudest hearts may be subdu'd;
 Hast thou not mark'd the hardest steel by fire
 Made soft and flexible? myself have seen
 By a slight rein the fiery courser held.
 'Tis not for slaves to be so haughty; yet
 This proud offender, not content, it seems,
 To violate my laws, adds crime to crime;
 Smiles at my threats, and glories in her guilt;
 If I shou'd suffer her to 'scape my vengeance,
 She were the man, not I; but tho' she sprang
 Ev'n from my sister, were I bound to her
 By ties more dear than is Hercæan Jove,

She

If it be, &c. Literally translated it wou'd be 'I talk foolishly
 to a fool;' this is exactly what Electra says to Clytæmnestra.

See Electra, v. 1. p. 131.

Hercæan Jove. Jupiter Hercæus, so called from being the guardian of every man's private habitation: in times of war and calamity, altars were erected to him, to which the unhappy fled as an asylum. Priam is reported to have been slain before one of these, as is alluded to by Ovid,

Cui nihil Hercæi profuit ara Jovis, Ov. in ibin.

A N T I G O N E.

25

She shou'd not 'scape; her sister too I find
 Accomplice in the deed; go, call her forth,
[to one of the attendants.

She is within, I saw her raving there,
 Her senses lost, the common fate of those
 Who practise dark and deadly wickedness.

[turning to Antigone.

I cannot bear to see the guilty stand
 Convicted of their crimes, and yet pretend
 To gloss them o'er with specious names of virtue.

A N T I G O N E.

I am thy captive; thou woud'st have my life;
 Will that content thee?

C R E O N.

Yes; 'tis all I wish.

A N T I G O N E.

Why this delay then, when thou know'st my words
 To thee as hateful are, as thine to me?
 Therefore dispatch; I cannot live to do
 A deed more glorious; and so these wou'd all

[pointing to the Chorus.

Confess, were not their tongues restrain'd by fear;
 It is the tyrant's privilege, we know,
 To speak and act whate'er he please, uncensur'd.

C R E O N.

Lives there another in the land of Thebes,
 Who thinks as thou dost?

A N T I G O N E.

Yes, a thousand; these,
 These think so too, but dare not utter it.

C R E O N.

The common fate, &c. According to the old adage.

Quos deus vult perdere, dementat prius.

CREON.

Dost thou not blush?

ANTIGONE.

For what? why blush to pay

A sister's duty?

CREON.

But, Eteocles,

Say, was not he thy brother too?

ANTIGONE.

He was.

CREON.

Why then thus rev'rence him who least deserv'd it?

ANTIGONE.

Perhaps that brother thinks not so.

CREON.

He must,

If thou pay'st equal honour to them both.

ANTIGONE.

He was a brother, not a slave.

CREON.

One fought

Against that country, which the other sav'd.

ANTIGONE.

But equal death the rites of sepulture

Decrees to both.

CREON.

What! reverence alike

The guilty and the innocent!

ANTI.

He was. The original is, 'he was my brother by the same father, and by the same mother;' the Greek writers, though generally concise, are sometimes very prolix, as in the passage before us, where the sentiment takes up a whole line in the original, and is better expressed in these two words of the translation.

ANTIGONE.

27

ANTIGONE.

Perhaps

The gods below esteem it just.

CREON.

A foe

Though dead, shou'd as a foe be treated still.

ANTIGONE.

My love shall go with thine, but not my hate.

CREON.

Go then, and love them in the tomb; but know,

No woman rules in Thebes, whilst Creon lives.

CHORUS.

Lo! at the portal stands the fair Ismene,

Tears in her lovely eyes, a cloud of grief

Sits on her brow, wetting her beauteous cheek

With pious sorrow for a sister's fate.

SCENE VI.

ISMENE, ANTIGONE, CREON, CHORUS.

CREON.

Come forth, thou serpent, little did I think

That I had nourish'd two such deadly foes

To suck my blood, and cast me from my throne:

What say'st thou? wer't thou 'complice in the deed,

Or wilt thou swear that thou art innocent?

ISMENE.

I do acknowledge it, if she permit me,

I was accomplice, and the crime was mine.

ANTIGONE.

'Tis false, thou did'st refuse, nor wou'd I hold

Communion with thee.

IS-

ANTIGONE.

ISMENE.

But in thy misfortunes

Let me partake, my sister, let me be

A fellow-sufferer with thee.

ANTIGONE.

Witness, death,

And ye infernal gods, to which belongs

The great, the glorious deed! I do not love

These friends in word alone.

ISMENE.

Antigone,

Do not despise me, I but ask to dye

With thee, and pay due honours to the dead.

ANTIGONE.

Pretend not to a merit which thou hast not.

Live thou; it is enough for me to perish.

ISMENE.

But what is life without thee?

ANTIGONE.

Ask thy friend

And patron there.

[pointing to Creon.]

ISMENE.

Why that unkind reproach,

When thou shou'dst rather comfort me?

ANTIGONE.

Alas!

It gives me pain when I am forc'd to speak

So bitterly against thee.

ISMENE.

Is there aught

That I can do to save thee?

ANTE

ANTIGONE.

29

ANTIGONE.

Save thyself,

I shall not envy thee.

ISMENE.

And will you not

Permit me then to share your fate?

ANTIGONE.

Thy choice

Was life; 'tis mine to dye.

ISMENE.

I told thee oft

It wou'd be so.

ANTIGONE.

Thou did'st, and was't not well

Thus to fulfil thy prophecy?

ISMENE.

The crime

Was mutual, mutual be the punishment.

ANTIGONE.

Fear not; thy life is safe, but mine long since

Devoted to the dead.

CREON.

Both seem depriv'd

Of reason; one indeed was ever thus.

ISMENE.

O! king, the mind doth seldom keep her seat

When sunk beneath misfortunes.

CREON.

Sunk indeed

Thou wert in wretchedness to join with her.

ISMENE.

But what is life without Antigone?

CREON.

ANTIGONE.

CREON.

Then think not of it; for she is no more.

ISMENE.

Woud'st thou destroy thy son's long-destin'd wife?

CREON.

O! we shall find a fitter bride.

ISMENE.

Alas!

He will not think so.

CREON.

I'll not wed my son

To a base woman.

ANTIGONE.

O! my dearest Hæmon!

And is it thus thy father doth disgrace thee?

CREON.

Such an alliance were as hateful to me

As is thyself.

ISMENE.

Wilt thou then take her from him?

CREON.

O! we shall find a fitter bride. The original is, Ἀρωσίου γὰρ χ' ἀρεσὺν εἰσὶν γυαί, 'arabilia sunt aliorum arva,' which literally translated is, 'there are other fields to be till'd.' As this image might be thought a little too gross for modern delicacy I have dropped it, and only retained the sentiment which it was designed to convey. Rattallerus has softened it thus, 'haud fæminæ deerunt creandis liberis.'

O! My dearest Hæmon. Antigone's love of Hæmon heightens the distress of the tragedy, by setting in a stronger light the tyranny of Creon, who thus sacrifices the happiness of his son to his resentment. Antigone becomes likewise a greater object of compassion; in spite of all her courage and resolution, a sigh escapes her for the fate of Hæmon, doom'd to feel such misfortunes from an unnatural father. Her complaint consists but of a line, which a modern writer would have spun out to many a page.

A N T I G O N E.

31

C R E O N.

Their nuptials shall be finished by death.

I S M E N E.

She then must perish?

C R E O N.

So must you and I;

Therefore no more delay; go, take them hence,

Confine them both: henceforth they shall not stir;

When death is near at hand the bravest fly.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E I.

Thrice happy they, whose days in pleasure flow,

Who never taste the bitter cup of woe;

For when the wrath of heav'n descends

On some devoted house, there foul disgrace,

With grief and all her train attends,

And shame and sorrow o'erwhelm the wretched race.

Ev'n as the Thracian sea, when vex'd with storms,

Whilst darkness hangs incumbent o'er the deep,

When the black North the troubled scene deforms,

And the black sands in rapid whirlwinds sweep,

The groaning waves beat on the trembling shore,

And echoing hills rebellow to the roar.

A N T I S T R O P H E I.

O! Labdacus, thy house must perish all;

Ev'n

Thrice happy they, &c. This beautiful intermede, or song of the chorus, arises naturally from the preceding circumstances, and laments the ruin of the family of OEdipus. The strophe, on the power and knowledge of Jupiter, is noble and poetical, and gives us a favourable idea of heathen piety and virtue.

O! Labdacus, &c. The genealogy of the unfortunate house of OEdipus, runs thus, 'Cadmus, Polydorus, Labdacus, Laius, 'OEdipus, Eteocles, Polynices, Antigone and Ismene.

Ev'n now I see the stately ruin fall;
 Shame heap'd on shame, and ill on ill,
 Disgrace and never-ending woes;
 Some angry god pursues thee still,
 Nor grants or safety or repose:
 One fair and lovely branch unwither'd stood
 And brav'd th' inclement skies;
 But Pluto comes, inexorable god,
 She sinks, she raves, she dyes.

STROPHE II.

Shall man below controul the gods above,
 Or human pride restrain the pow'r of Jove,
 Whose eyes by all-subduing sleep
 Are never clos'd as feeble mortals are,
 But still their watchful vigils keep
 Through the large circle of th' eternal year!
 Great lord of all, whom neither time nor age
 With envious stroke can weaken or decay;
 He, who alone the future can presage,
 Who knows alike to-morrow as to-day;
 Whilst wretched man is doom'd, by heav'n's decree,
 To toil and pain, to sin and misery.

ANTI-

One fair and lovely branch, &c. The chorus here plainly alludes to the unfortunate Antigone, whom Pluto, or the infernal gods, obliged to pay funeral rites to her brother Polynices.

Whose eyes, &c. "He that keepeth thee will not slumber." Behold he that "keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

Psaln cxxi. v. 3, 4.

Th' eternal year. The Greek is ἀκαμάτοι θίωι μῆνες 'the untired months of the gods,' which conveys a fine image, but would not admit of a literal translation.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Oft times the flatt'ring hope, that joy inspires,
 Fills the proud heart of man with fond desires;
 He, careless traveller, wanders still
 Thro' life, unmindful of deceit,
 Nor dreads the danger, till he feel
 The burning sands beneath his feet.
 When heav'n impels to guilt the madd'ning mind,
 Then good like ill appears,
 And vice, for universal hate design'd,
 The face of virtue wears.

[Exeunt,

ACT III.

SCENE I.

CREON, HÆMON, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

BEHOLD, O! king, thy youngest hope appear,
 The noble Hæmon; lost in grief he seems,
 Weeping the fate of poor Antigone.

VOL. II.

D

CREON.

He, careless traveller, &c. Sophocles says,

Εἰς οὐτὸ δ' ἔσθ' ἐπὶ

Πρὶν πυρὶ δάψωμ ποδὰ τις προσέη

* Nihil enim scienti contingit,

* Priusquam igni ardenti pedem quis admoverit.

This beautiful image is, we see, but imperfectly glanced at in the original; I have endeavoured to express it more fully in the translation. Horace seems to have caught this idea in his

* Incedis per ignes

* Suppositos cineri doloso.

HOR.

C R E O N.

He comes, and better than a prophet, soon
 Shall we divine his inmost thoughts : my son,
 Com'ft thou, well-knowing our decree, to mourn
 Thy promis'd bride, and angry to dispute
 A father's will ; or, whatsoe'er we do
 Still to hold best, and pay obedience to us ?

H Æ M O N.

My father, I am thine ; do thou command,
 And I in all things shall obey ; 'tis fit
 My promis'd nuptial rites give place to thee.

C R E O N.

It will become thee with obedience thus
 To bear thee ever, and in ev'ry act
 To yield submissive to a father's will :
 'Tis therefore, O my son, that men do pray
 For children, who with kind officious duty
 May guard their helpless age, resist their foes,
 And like their parents love their parent's friend ;
 But he, who gets a disobedient child,
 What doth he get but misery and woe ?
 His enemies will laugh the wretch to scorn.
 Take heed, my son, thou yield not up thy reason,
 In hopes of pleasure from a worthless woman ;

For

His enemies, &c. The scripture expression, which I have here made use of, seems to convey the most exact idea of the original : one cannot read this passage of Sophocles, without recollecting the words of the holy Psalmist ;

- * Like as the arrows in the hand of the giant, even so are the young children ;
- * Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them ; they shall not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate.

Psal. cxxvii. v. 5, 6.

For cold is the embrace of impious love;
And deep the wounds of false dissembled friendship;
Hate then thy bitt' rest foe, despise her arts,
And leave her to be wedded to the tomb;
Of all the city her alone I found
Rebellious; but I have her, nor shall Thebes
Say I'm a liar; I pronounc'd her fate,
And she must perish; let her call on Jove
Who guards the rights of kindred, and the ties
Of nature; for if those by blood united
Transgress the laws, I hold myself more near
Ev'n to a stranger: who in private life
Is just and good, will to his country too
Be faithful ever; but the man who proud
And fierce of soul contemns authority,
Despiset justice, and o'er those who rule
Wou'd have dominion, such shall never gain
Th' applauding voice of Creon; he alone,
Whom the consenting citizens approve,
Th' acknowledg'd sov'reign, shou'd in all command;
Just or unjust his laws, in things of great
Or little import, whatsoe'er he bids,
A subject is not to dispute his will;

D₂

Th' acknowledged sov'reign, &c. Sophocles, with the utmost propriety, puts the maxims of arbitrary government into the mouth of a tyrant, whose character he designs to render most odious and detestable to his countrymen, the free citizens of Athens. In the old poet Rotrou, we find the passage before us thus illustrated and adapted to a French theatre;

- Sur les desseins des Rois, comme sur ceux des dieux,
- Des fideles sujets doivent fermer les yeux,
- Et soumettant leur sens au pouvoir des couronnes,
- Quelles que soient les loix, croire qu'elles sont bonnes.

He knows alike to rule and to obey;
 And in the day of battle will maintain
 The foremost rank, his country's best defence.
 Rebellion is the worst of human ills;
 This ruins kingdoms, this destroys the peace
 Of noblest families; this wages war,
 And puts the brave to flight; whilst fair obedience
 Keeps all in safety; to preserve it ever
 Shou'd be a king's first care; we will not yield
 To a weak woman; if we must submit,
 At least we will be conquer'd by a man,
 Nor by a female arm thus fall inglorious.

H. E. M. O. N.

Wisdom, my father, is the noblest gift
 The gods bestow on man, and better far
 Than all his treasures; what thy judgment deems
 Most fit, I cannot, wou'd not reprehend;
 Others perhaps might call it wrong; for me,
 My duty only bids me to inform you
 If aught be done or said that casts reproach
 Or blame on you: such terror wou'd thy looks
 Strike on the low plebeian, that he dare not
 Say aught displeasing to thee; be it mine
 To tell thee then, what I of late have heard
 In secret whisper'd; your afflicted people
 United mourn th' unhappy virgin's fate
 Unmerited, most wretched of her sex,
 To
Such terror, &c. Rotrou has translated, or rather paraphrased
 this with spirit;
 Jamais la verité, cette fille timide,
 Pour entrer chez les rois ne trouve qu'il la guide,
 Au lieu que le mensonge a mille partisans,
 Et vous est présenté par mille courtisans.

To die for deeds of such distinguish'd virtue,
 For that she wou'd not let a brother lye
 Unburied, to the dogs and birds a prey;
 Was it not rather, say the murm'ring croud,
 Worthy of golden honours, and fair praise?
 Such are their dark and secret discontents.
 Thy welfare, and thy happiness alone
 Are all my wish; what can a child desire
 More than a father's honour, or a father
 More than his child's? O! do not then retain
 Thy will, and still believe no sense but thine.
 Can judge aright: the man who proudly thinks
 None but himself or eloquent, or wise,
 By time betray'd, is branded for an idiot;
 True wisdom will be ever glad to learn,
 And not too fond of pow'r; observe the trees
 That bend to wint'ry torrents, how their boughs
 Unhurt remain, whilst those that brave the storm,
 Uprooted torn, shall wither and decay;
 The pilot, whose unslacken'd sail defies
 Contending winds, with shatter'd bark pursues
 His dang'rous course; then mitigate thy wrath,
 My father, and give way to sweet repentance.
 If to my youth be aught of judgment giv'n,
 He, who by knowledge and true wisdom's rules
 Guides ev'ry action, is the first of men;
 But since to few that happiness is giv'n,

D 3

The

What can a child, &c. The filial piety, obedience, and softness of Hæmon, is finely contrasted to the imperious severity, and inexorable cruelty of his father; we cannot, at the same time, but perceive that his answer to Creon is, considering his circumstances, rather too cold, and sententious, 'la morale (as Brumoy observes) est poussée assez loin, à la manière des Grecs.'

The next is he, who, not too proud to learn,
Follows the counsels of the wise and good:

CHORUS.

O! king, if right the youth advise, 'tis fit
That thou shoud'st listen to him; so to thee
Shou'd he attend, as best may profit both.

CREON.

And hav'd we liv'd so long then to be taught,
At last our duty by a boy like thee?

HÆMON.

Young tho' I am, I still may judge aright;
Wisdom in action lyes, and not in years.

CREON.

Call you it wisdom then to honour those
Who disobey the laws?

HÆMON.

I wou'd not have thee
Protect the wicked.

CREON.

Is she not most guilty?

HÆMON.

Thebes doth not think her so:

CREON.

Shall Thebes prescribe
To Creon's will?

HÆMON.

How weakly dost thou talk!

CREON.

Am I king here, or shall another reign?

HÆ-

Wisdom in action, &c. * Honourable age (says Solomon) is not
* that which standeth in length of time, nor that is measured by
* number of years; but wisdom is the grey hair unto men; and an
* unspotted life is old age. Book of Wisdom.

A N T I G O N E.

39

H Æ M O N.

'Tis not a city, where but one man rules.

C R E O N.

The city is the king's.

H Æ M O N.

Go by thyself then,
And rule henceforth o'er a deserted land.

C R E O N.

[to the chorus.

He pleads the woman's cause.

H Æ M O N.

If thou art she,
I do; for, O! I speak but for thy sake;
My care is all for thee.

C R E O N.

Abandon'd wretch!

Dispute a father's will!

H Æ M O N.

I see thee err,

And therefore do it.

C R E O N.

Is it then a crime

To guard my throne and rights from violation?

H Æ M O N.

He cannot guard them, who contemns the gods,
And violates their laws.

C R E O N.

O! thou art worse,
More impious ev'n than her thou hast defended.

H Æ M O N.

Nought have I done to merit this reproof.

C R E O N.

Hast thou not pleaded for her?

ANTIGONE.

HÆMON.

No; for thee,
And for myself; for the infernal gods.

CREON.

But know, she shall not live to be thy wife.

HÆMON.

Then she must die; another too may fall.

CREON.

Ha! dost thou threaten me? audacious traitor.

HÆMON.

What are my threats? alas! thou heed'st them not.

CREON.

That thou shalt see; thy insolent instruction
Shall cost thee dear.

HÆMON.

But for thou art my father,
Now wou'd I say thy senses were impair'd.

CREON.

Think not to make me thus thy scorn and laughter,
Thou woman's slave.

HÆMON.

Still wou'd'st thou speak thyself,

And

Another too may fall. The Greek is *ἄλλος τις*. 'When-
' ever she dies she will destroy somebody.' The sense, we see, is
purposely left ambiguous; Creon imagines that Hæmon has a de-
sign upon his life; it appears afterwards that he meant his own.
This whole scene consists, in the original, of short speeches of one
verse each, containing an equal number of syllables in every line,
which, one would imagine, must have caused a disagreeable mono-
tony throughout; a circumstance which I have endeavoured to avoid
in the translation, by frequently dividing the blank verse between
the two speakers, which relieves the ear of the reader, and would
on the stage give more life and spirit to the action.

And never listen to the voice of truth ;
Such is thy will.

CREON.

Now by Olympus here

I swear, thy vile reproaches shall not pass
Unpunish'd ; call her forth ; before her bridegroom

[To one of the attendants.]

She shall be brought, and perish in his sight.

HÆMON.

These eyes shall never see it ; let the slaves
Who fear thy rage submit to it ; but know,
'Tis the last time thou shalt behold thy son. [Exit Hæm.

SCENE II.

CREON, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Sudden in anger fled the youth ; O ! king,
A mind oppress'd like his is desperate.

CREON.

Why, let him go ; and henceforth better learn
Than to oppose me ; be it as it may,
Death is their portion, and he shall not save them.

CHORUS.

Must they both die then ?

CREON.

No ; 'tis well advis'd,
Ismene lives ; but for Antigone—

CHORUS.

O ! king, what death is she decreed to suffer ?

CREON.

Far from the haunts of men I'll have her led,

And

And in a rocky cave, beneath the earth,
 Bury'd alive ; with her a little food,
 Enough to save the city from pollution ;
 There let her pray the only god she worships
 To save her from this death : perhaps he will,
 Or if he doth not, let her learn how vain
 It is to reverence the pow'rs below.

[Exit Creon.]

SCENE III.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Mighty pow'r, all pow'rs above,
 Great unconquerable love !
 Thou, who ly'st in dimple sleek
 On the tender virgin's cheek,
 Thee the rich and great obey,
 Ev'ry creature owns thy sway.

O'er

With her a little food. To destroy any one by famine was looked on by the Grecians as impious ; probably (as is observed by the scholiast on this passage) because it reflected disgrace on any country to suffer its inhabitants to perish by hunger ; when they buried persons alive, therefore, it was customary to give them a small quantity of victuals, ‘ *ὅπως μίσμα* (says Sophocles) *υπεκφυγοι πόλιν*, ‘ that the city might escape pollution ;’ a piece of Pagan superstition not unlike our modern jesuitism, calculated, we may observe, with a design to separate crimes from guilt, and give tyrants a power to gratify their resentment with impunity.

Mighty pow'r, &c. The ladies will probably be surprised, and, I doubt not equally pleased, to meet, in so ancient a writer as Sophocles, with an ode expressly on the power of love ; though they may at the same time find fault with my author's brevity on a subject so extensive.

O'er the wide earth and o'er the main
Extends thy universal reign;
All thy madd'ning influence know,
Gods above, and men below;
All thy pow'rs resistless prove,
Great unconquerable love!

ANTISTROPHE I.

Thou can'st lead the just astray
From wisdom and from virtue's way;
The ties of nature cease to bind,
When thou disturb'st the captive mind.
Behold, enslav'd by fond desire,
The youth contemns his aged fire,
Enamour'd of his beauteous maid,
Nor laws nor parents are obey'd;
Thus Venus wills it from above,
And great unconquerable love.

CHORUS.

Ev'n I, beyond the common bounds of grief,
Indulge my sorrows, and from these sad eyes
Fountains of tears will flow, when I behold
Antigone, unhappy maid, approach
The bed of death, and hasten to the tomb.

SCENE IV.

ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

ANTIGONE.

Farewel, my friends, my countrymen, farewel!

Here

Farewel, my friends, &c. This lamentation of Antigone, though perhaps more agreeable to the taste of the antients than our own, is extremely beautiful and pathetic; we meet with another of the same

Here on her last sad journey you behold
 The poor Antigone; for never more
 Shall I return, or view the light of day:
 The hand of death conducts me to the shore
 Of dreary Acheron; no nuptial song
 Reserv'd for me, the wretched bride alone
 Of Pluto now, and wedded to the tomb.

C H O R U S.

Be it thy glory still, that by the sword
 Thou fall'st not, nor the slow-consuming hand
 Of foul distemp'rature, but far distinguish'd
 Above thy sex, and to thyself a law,
 Doom'st thy own death, so shall thy honour live,
 And future ages venerate thy name.

A N T I G O N E.

Thus Tantalus' unhappy daughter fell,
 The Phrygian Niobe; high on the top

Of

same kind in the last act of the *Iphigenia in Aulis*, by Euripides. Such, we may imagine, was the lamentation of the daughter of Jephtha, when she went with her companions and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains, as it is related in the 12th chapter of the book of Judges. Brumoy judiciously observes on this passage, that the grief here expressed by Antigone is not in the least inconsistent with her character; as to meet death with insensibility is rather brutality than heroism. At the same time that Antigone makes the sacrifice of life, she seems conscious of its value; her complaints are the last sighs of nature, which, so far from diminishing true greatness of mind, serve but to give it a more distinguishing lustre. The speeches of Antigone (in the original) are in strophe and antistrophe, but as they are interrupted by the replies of the chorus, would, I thought, have appeared awkward in ode or rhyme; I have therefore preserved the blank verse.

The Phrygian Niobe. The story of Niobe, the daughter of Tantalus, changed into a rock, is too well known to need any explanation. See Quid's *Meta.* b. 6.

Of tow'ring Sipylus the rock enfolds her,
 Ev'n as the ivy twines her tendrils round
 The lofty oak, there still (as fame reports)
 To melting show'rs, and everlasting snow
 Obvious she stands, her beauteous bosom wet
 With tears, that from her ever-streaming eyes
 Incessant flow; her fate resembles mine.

CHORUS.

A goddess she, and from a goddess sprung;
 We are but mortal, and of mortals born:
 To meet the fate of gods thus in thy life,
 And in thy death, O! 'tis a glorious doom.

ANTIGONE.

Alas! thou mock'st me! why, whilst yet I live,
 Wou'd'st thou afflict me with reproach like this?
 O! my dear country, and my dearer friends
 Its blest inhabitants, renowned Thebes!
 And ye Dircean fountains, you I call
 To witness, that I die by laws unjust,
 To my deep prison unlamented go,
 To my sad tomb, no fellow-suff'rer there
 To sooth my woes, the living, or the dead.

CHORUS.

Rashness like thine must meet with such reward;
 A father's crimes, I fear, lye heavy on thee.

ANTIGONE.

Oh! thou hast touch'd my worst of miseries!
 My father's fate, the woes of all our house,
 The wretched race of Labdacus, renown'd
 For its misfortunes! O! the guilty bed
 Of those from whom I sprang; unhappy offspring
 Of parents most unhappy! lo! to them
 I go accurs'd; a virgin and a slave.

O! my poor brother! most unfortunate
Were thy sad nuptials; they have slain thy sister.

CHORUS.

Thy piety demands our praise; but know,
Authority is not to be despis'd;
'Twas thy own rashness brought destruction on thee.

ANTIGONE.

Thus friendless, unlamented, must I tread
The destin'd path, no longer to behold
Yon sacred light, and none shall mourn my fate.

SCENE V.

CREON, ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

CREON.

Know ye not, slaves like her to death devoted
Wou'd never cease their wailings? wherefore is it
You thus delay to execute my orders?
Let her be carry'd instant to the cave,
And leave her there alone, to live, or die;
Her blood rests not on us; but she no longer
Shall breathe on earth. [Exit Creon.

SCENE VI.

ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

ANTIGONE.

O! dreadful marriage bed!
O! my deep dungeon! my eternal home,
Whither

Thy sad nuptials. Polynices married the daughter of Adrastus, who, in defence of his son-in-law, led his Argians against Thebes: thus his marriage was the cause of his death, and the decree against Antigone consequent upon it.

Whither I go to join my kindred dead !
 For not a few hath fell Persephone
 Already ta'en; to her I go, the last
 And most unhappy, e'er my time was come;
 But still I have sweet hope I shall not go
 Unwelcome to my father, nor to thee,
 My mother; dear to thee, Eteocles,
 Still shall I ever be; these pious hands
 Wash'd your pale bodies, and adorn'd you both
 With rites sepulchral, and libations due:
 And thus, my Polynices, for my care
 Of thee am I rewarded, and the good
 Alone shall praise me: for a husband dead,
 Nor, had I been a mother, for my children
 Wou'd I have dared to violate the laws;
 Another husband and another child
 Might sooth affliction; but, my parents dead,
 A brother's loss cou'd never be repair'd,

And

A brother's loss, &c. Sophocles visibly alludes in this passage to the following story told by Herodotus in his *Thalia*.

Darius suspecting that Intaphernes and his relations might raise a rebellion against him, caused him to be seized with his children and family; whilst they were under confinement, and bound in order to execution, the wife of Intaphernes went to the gates of the palace, weeping and lamenting loudly, which she continued so assiduously, that at last Darius, moved with compassion, sent a messenger to speak to her in these terms, "Woman, the king gives you the life of any one among your relations who are prisoners, and leaves you the choice of the person. Since the king, said she, after some deliberation, will grant me no more than one, I chuse my brother." Darius, when he heard her answer, wondering at her choice, dispatched another messenger, to ask her in his name, "why she had shewn so little regard to her husband, and children," and

And therefore did I dare the vent'rous deed,
 And therefore die by Creon's dread command.
 Ne'er shall I taste of Hymen's joys, or know
 A mother's pleasures in her infant race;
 But, friendless and forlorn, alive descend
 Into the dreary mansions of the dead:
 And how have I offended the just gods!
 But wherefore call on them! will they protect me,
 When thus I meet with the reward of ill
 For doing good? if this be just, ye gods,
 If I am guilty let me suffer for it;
 But if the crime be theirs, O! let them feel
 That weight of mis'ry they have laid on me.

C H O R U S.

The storm continues, and her angry soul
 Still pours its sorrows forth.

S C E N E VII.

CREON, ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

CREON.

The slaves shall suffer

For this delay.

A N T I-

"and rather chose to save the life of her brother, who was not so near related to her as her children, nor could be so dear to her as her husband? She answered, "that by the permission of God, she might have another husband, and other children, if she should be deprived of those she had; but could never have another brother, because her father and mother were already dead." The king was so well pleased with this answer, that he not only pardoned her brother, but gave her likewise the life of her eldest son, and put all the rest to death.

See Littlebury's Herodotus, v. 1. p. 313.

ANTIGONE.

49

ANTIGONE.

Alas! death cannot be

Far from that voice.

CREON.

I wou'd not have thee hope

A moment's respite.

ANTIGONE.

O! my country's gods!

And thou, my native Thebes, I leave you now:

Look on me, princes, see the last of all

My royal race, see what I suffer, see

From whom I bear it, from the worst of men,

Only because I did delight in virtue.

[Exit Creon.

SCENE VIII.

ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Remember what fair Danae endur'd,

VOL. II.

E

Con-

Remember what, &c. The chorus, as dependants on Creon, could neither defend nor assist Antigone, they can only lament those misfortunes which it was not in their power to remove; they endeavour therefore to assuage her grief by the mention of other illustrious persons, whom they compare with her, not in their guilt, but in their sufferings.

Fair Danae. Acrisius, king of the Argives, having been warned by an oracle, that he should be slain by his grandson, shut up his daughter Danae in a brazen tower; Jupiter, however, according to the poets, gained access to her, by transforming himself into a golden shower. Horace has applied this fiction with his usual elegance.

See book 3. od. 16.

Condemn'd to change heav'n's chearful light
 For scenes of horror and of night,
 Within a brazen tow'r long time immur'd;
 Yet was the maid of noblest race,
 And honour'd ev'n with Jove's embrace;
 But O! when fate decrees a mortal's woe,
 Nought can reverse the doom, or stop the blow,
 Nor heav'n above, nor earth and seas below.

A N T I S T R O P H E I.

The Thracian monarch, Dryas' hapless son,
 Chain'd to a rock in torment lay,
 And breath'd his angry soul away,
 By wrath misguided, and by pride undone;
 Taught by th' offended god to know
 From foul reproach what evils flow;
 For he the rites prophan'd with fland'rous tongue,
 The holy flame he quench'd, disturb'd the song,
 And wak'd to wrath the muses' tuneful throng.

S T R O P H E II.

His turbid waves where Salmydessus roll'd,
 And proud Cyanea's rocks divide the flood,

There

The Thracian monarch. Lycurgus, king of Thrace, for contemning, or disturbing the rites of Bacchus was, according to Sophocles, chain'd to a rock, where he perish'd. Homer punishes him with blindness. See the Iliad, b. 7. Some are of opinion that the fable took its rise from this monarch's virtuous regard for his people, who seeing the ill effects of their intemperance in the use of wine, caused all the vines in his country to be rooted up and destroyed. Brumoy, by mistake, calls this Thracian monarch Orpheus, though he is both here and in Homer specified as the son of Dryas, and consequently can be no other than the Lycurgus abovementioned.

Salmydessus, &c. Salmydessus was a river in Thrace, near which was a temple dedicated to Mars. The Cyaneæ were two rocks, or small islands near the Thracian Bosphorus.

ANTIGONE.

51

There from thy temple, Mars, did'st thou behold
The sons of Phineus weltring in their blood;

A mother did the cruel deed,

A mother bad her children bleed;

Both, by her impious hand, depriv'd of light,

In vain lamented long their ravish'd sight,

And clos'd their eyes in never-ending night.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Long time they wept a better mother's fate,

Unhappy offspring of a luckless bed!

Yet nobly born, and eminently great

Was she, and mid'st sequester'd caverns bred;

Her father's angry storms among,

Daughter of gods, from Boreas sprung;

Equal in swiftness to the bounding steed,

She skim'd the mountains with a courser's speed,

Yet was the nymph to death and misery decreed.

[Exeunt.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

TIRESIAS, GUIDE, CREON, CHORUS.

TIRESIAS.

PRINCES of Thebes, behold, conducted hither

By my kind guide, (such is the blind man's fate)

Tiresias comes.

E 2

CREON.

The sons of Phineus. Plexippus and Pandion, whose eyes were put out by their step-mother Idæa, the wife of Phineus, after the death of their own mother Cleopatra, the daughter of Boreas and Orithyia, whose fate is alluded to in the latter part of the ode.

Princes of Thebes. The name *Ἀνακτες*, or princes among the Greeks, was given not only to sovereigns, but frequently to the principal

ANTIGONE.

CREON.

O! venerable prophet,

What hast thou to impart?

TIRESIAS.

I will inform thee;

Observe, and be obedient.

CREON.

Have I not

Been ever so?

TIRESIAS.

Thou hast; and therefore Thebes

Hath flourish'd still-----

CREON.

By thy prote&ing hand.

TIRESIAS.

Therefore be wise; for know, this very hour

Is the important crisis of thy fate.

CREON.

Speak then, what is it? how I dread thy words!

TIRE-

principal and most honourable members of the commonwealth: Tiresias, we see, compliments the ancient citizens of Thebes, who composed the chorus, with this title.

Observe, and be obedient. The prophet Tiresias is here introduced with great propriety; his appearance has something in it very solemn and affecting, his age and blindness adding a kind of melancholy dignity to the scene: the tyrant himself, we see, pays, at first, the utmost deference to his authority, and trembles at his power, though he afterwards treats him with contempt, and even accuses him of being corrupted by the friends of Antigone. This conduct of the poet is artful, as it raises the character of the prophet, and heightens his consequence, at the same time that it aggravates the guilt of Creon, by representing him as a contemner of the gods, and renders him a fitter object of divine vengeance.

TIRESIAS.

When thou hast heard the portents which my art
But now discover'd, thou wilt see it all.
Know then, that sitting on my antient throne
Augurial, whence each divination comes,
Sudden a strange unusual noise was heard
Of birds, whose loud and barb'rous dissonance
I knew not how t' interpret; by the sound
Of clashing wings, I cou'd discover well
That with their bloody claws they tore each other;
Amaz'd and fearful, instantly I try'd
On burning altars holy sacrifice;
When, from the victim, lo! the fullen flame
Aspir'd not.; smother'd in the ashes still

E 3

Lay'd

Of birds, &c. Divination by birds was in great esteem among the antients; the augurs were cloathed in white, with a crown of gold upon their heads, and seated on a kind of throne, from whence, as the scholiast informs us, they had power to assemble the birds from all quarters, whenever they had occasion for them. Tiresias does not tell us what birds they were that he heard fighting in the air, most probably vulturs, as they feed only on carcases; these, and other birds of prey, were always supposed to foretel blood and slaughter.

From the victim, &c. Tiresias alarmed at the fighting of the birds, proceeds to the πυρομαρτεία, or divination by fire of the sacrifice, which terrifies him with fresh omens; for, when the fire was kindled with difficulty, when the flame was divided, when it did not immediately spread itself over all the parts of the victim, but consumed them by degrees; when instead of ascending in a strait line, it whirl'd round, or was extinguish'd; when it cast forth a thick black smoke; when the μηρᾱι, or thighs of the victim, parts appropriated more particularly to the gods, were not covered with fat, in order to consume them more quickly; all these were considered as marks of the divine displeasure, and infallible portents of future misery.

Lay'd the moist flesh, and, roll'd in smoke, repell'd
 The rising fire, whilst from their fat the thighs
 Were sep'rate; all these signs of deadly omen,
 Boding dark vengeance, did I learn from him; [pointing
 He is my leader, king, and I am thine. to the guide.]
 Then mark me well; from thee these evils flow,
 From thy unjust decree; our altars all
 Have been polluted by th' unhallow'd food
 Of birds and dogs, that prey'd upon the corse
 Of wretched OEdipus' unhappy son;
 Nor will the gods accept our offer'd pray'rs,
 Or from our hands receive the sacrifice;
 No longer will the birds send forth their sounds
 Auspicious, fatten'd thus with human blood.
 Consider this, my son; and, O! remember,
 To err is human; 'tis the common lot
 Of frail mortality; and he alone
 Is wise and happy who, when ills are done,
 Persists not, but wou'd heal the wound he made;
 But self-sufficient obstinacy ever
 Is folly's utmost heighth: where is the glory
 To slay the slain, or persecute the dead?
 I wish thee well, and therefore have spoke thus;
 When those who love advise 'tis sweet to learn.

C R E O N.

I know, old man, I am the gen'ral mark,
 The butt of all, and you all aim at me:
 For me I know your prophecies were made,
 And I am sold to this detested race;
 Betray'd to them: but make your gains; go, purchase
 Your Sardinian amber, and your indian gold;

They

Your Sardinian amber. Sardis was a principal city of Lydia, near
 the

They shall not buy a tomb for Polynices :
No, shou'd the eagle seek him for his food,
And tow'ring bear him to the throne of Jove,
I wou'd not bury him ; for well I know,
The gods by mortals cannot be polluted ;
But the best men, by fordid gain corrupt,
Say all that's ill, and fall beneath the lowest.

T I R E S I A S.

Who knows this, or who dare accuse us of it ?

C R E O N.

What mean'st thou by that question ? ask'st thou who ?

T I R E S I A S.

How far is wisdom beyond ev'ry good !

C R E O N.

As far as folly beyond ev'ry ill.

T I R E S I A S.

That's a distemper thou'rt afflicted with.

C R E O N.

I'll not revile a prophet.

T I R E S I A S.

But thou dost ;

Thou'llt not believe me.

C R E O N.

Your prophetic race

Are lovers all of gold.

T I R E S I A S.

Tyrants are so,

Howe'er ill-gotten.

E 4

C R E O N.

the river Pactolus, celebrated in the fables of antiquity for what it never had, sands of gold ; Sophocles calls it *ηλεκτρον*, or amber, probably on account of its transparency.

CREON.

Know'st thou 'tis a king
Thou'rt talking thus to?

TIRESIAS.

Yes, I know it well;
A king, who owes to me his country's safety.

CREON.

Thou'rt a wise prophet, but thou art unjust.

TIRESIAS.

Thou wilt oblige me then to utter that
Which I had purpos'd to conceal.

CREON.

Speak out,
Say what thou wilt, but say it not for hire.

TIRESIAS.

Thus may it seem to thee.

CREON.

But know, old man,
I am not to be fold.

TIRESIAS.

Remember this:

Not many days shall the bright sun perform
His stated course, e'er sprung from thy own loins
Thyself shall yield a victim, in thy turn
Thou too shalt weep, for that thy cruel sentence
Decreed a guiltless virgin to the tomb,
And kept on earth, unmindful of the gods,
Ungraced, unburied, an unhallow'd corse,
Which not to thee, nor to the gods above

Of

Nor to the gods above, &c. The heathen deities were divided into
the superi, and the inferi, the gods above, and the gods below; to
the

Of right belong'd; 'twas arbitrary pow'r:
 But the avenging furies lye conceal'd,
 The ministers of death have spread the snare,
 And with like woes await to punish thee;
 Do I say this from hopes of promis'd gold?
 Pass but a little time, and thou shalt hear
 The shrieks of men, the women's loud laments
 O'er all thy palace; see th' offended people
 Together rage; thy cities all by dogs
 And beasts and birds polluted, and the stench
 Of filth obscene on ev'ry altar laid.
 Thus from my angry soul have I sent forth
 It's keenest arrows (for thou hast provok'd me)
 Nor shall they fly in vain, or thou escape
 The destin'd blow: now, boy, conduct me home;
 On younger heads the tempest of his rage
 Shall fall; but, henceforth let him learn to speak
 In humbler terms, and bear a better mind.

[Exit Tiresias.

S C E N E II.

C R E O N, C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

He's gone, and dreadful were his prophecies;
 Since these grey hairs were o'er my temples spread,
 Nought from those lips hath flow'd but sacred truth.

C R E O N.

I know there hath not, and am troubled much

For

the latter of these the *Οἱ ὕπνῳ*, or, infernal powers, belonged
 the care of the dead, whom Creon had offended by refusing burial
 to the corpse of Polynices.

For the event : 'tis grating to submit,
And yet the mind spite of itself must yield
In such distress.

CHORUS.

Son of Menæceus, now
Thou need'st most counsel.

CREON.

What woud'st thou advise?

I will obey thee.

CHORUS.

Set the virgin free,
And let a tomb be rais'd for Polynices.

CREON.

• And dost thou counsel thus ? and must I yield ?

CHORUS.

Immediately, O ! king, for vengeance falls
With hasty footsteps on the guilty head.

CREON.

I cannot : yet I must reverse the sentence ;
There is no struggling with necessity.

CHORUS.

Do it thyself, nor trust another hand.

CREON.

I will ; and you my servants, be prepar'd ;
Each with his axe quick hasten to the place ;
Myself, (for thus I have resolved) will go,
And the same hand that bound shall set her free ;

For,

The same hand, &c. Creon, whose cruel nature was proof even against the remonstrances of paternal affection, is intimidated by the heavy judgments denounced against him by the prophet ; he goes out with a design to stop the execution of his sentence against Antigone ; this produces a new situation in the drama, and leaves the audience in suspense concerning the catastrophe.

For, O! I fear 'tis wisest still thro' life
To keep our antient laws, and follow virtue.

S C E N E III.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Bacchus, by various names to mortals known,
Fair Semele's illustrious son,
Offspring of thunder-bearing Jove,
Who honour'ft fam'd Italia with thy love!
Who dwell'ft where erst the dragon's teeth were strow'd,
Or where Ismenus pours his gentle flood;
Who dost o'er Ceres' hallow'd rites preside,
And at thy native Thebes propitious still reside.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Where fam'd Parnassus' forked hills uprise,
To thee ascends the sacrifice;
Corycia's nymphs attend below,
Whilst from Castalia's fount fresh waters flow:

O'er

Bacchus, by various names, &c. This chorus may be considered as an image of the antient Greek tragedy, which in its first rude state was no more than what we here meet with, a hymn to Bacchus. The old men, affrighted at the predictions of Tiresias denouncing misery to Thebes, address themselves to that god as their tutelary diety: the whole ode is in the original to the last degree beautiful, and written with the true spirit and genius of antiquity.

Fair Semele's illustrious son, &c. Bacchus was generally reputed a Theban, and supposed by the poets to be the son of Jupiter, by Semele the daughter of Cadmus; he had several names, as Lyæus, Euïus, Lenæus, Bromius, Eleleus, and many others. Italy is mentioned as his favourite country, on account of the number of vines growing there. He was worshipped together with Ceres in the Eleusinian mysteries.

Corycia's nymphs. The muses, so called from Corycium at the foot of mount Parnassus.

O'er Nyssa's mountains wreathes of ivy twine,
 And mix their tendrils with the clust'ring vine:
 Around their master croud the virgin throng,
 And praise the god of Thebes in never-dying song.

S T R O P H E II.

Happiest of cities, Thebes! above the rest

By Semele and Bacchus blest!

O! visit now thy once belov'd abode,

O! heal our woes, thou kind protecting god!

From steep Parnassus, or th' Eubæan sea,

With smiles auspicious come, and bring with thee

Health, joy and peace, and fair prosperity.

A N T I S T R O P H E II.

Immortal leader of the madd'ning choir,

Whose torches blaze with unextinguish'd fire,

Great son of Jove, who guid'st the tuneful throng,

Thou, who presidest o'er the nightly song,

Come with thy Naxian maids, a festive train,

Who wild with joy, and raging o'er the plain,

For thee the dance prepare, to thee devote the strain.

Exeunt.

A C T

Nyssa's mountains. Parnassus is described by the poets as having two tops, one called Cirrha, sacred to Apollo, the other Nyssa, sacred to Bacchus: there was also a city in Arcadia of this name, where Bacchus was nursed.

Naxian maids. Naxos was one of the Cyclades, islands in the Archipelago, famous for its vines: of the nymphs of Naxos, called Thyades, or Mænades, it is reported that they ran wild and frantic about the woods, with each a torch or thyrsus in her hand, singing the praises of Bacchus; Sophocles calls them therefore *ἡ μαινάδων χορός*, 'the madd'ning choir.'

ANTIGONE.

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A C T V.

S C E N E I.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MESSENGER.

YE race of Cadmus, sons of antient Thebes,
Henceforth no state of human life by me
Shall be or valu'd or despis'd : for all
Depends on fortune ; she exalts the low,
And casts the mighty down ; the fate of men
Can never be foretold : there was a time
When Creon liv'd in envy'd happiness,
Rul'd o'er renowned Thebes, which from her foes
He had deliver'd, with successful pow'r ;
Blest in his kingdom, in his children blest,
He stretch'd o'er all his universal sway ;
Now all is gone : when pleasure is no more,
Man is but as an animated corse,
Nor can be said to live ; he may be rich,
Or deck'd with regal honours ; but if joy
Be absent from him, if he tastes them not,
'Tis useless grandeur all, and empty shade.

CHORUS.

Touching our royal master bring'st thou news
Of sorrow to us ?

MES-

When pleasure is no more, &c. Athenæus will needs have it, that on this sentiment in Sophocles was founded the famous system of Epicurus, which places the summum bonum, or chief good, in the enjoyment of pleasure ; but as he gives us no authority in support of this opinion, we are not obliged to subscribe to it.

MESSENGER.

They are dead ; and those,
Who live, the dreadful cause.

CHORUS.

Quick, tell us who,
The slayer and the slain.

MESSENGER.

Hæmon is dead.

CHORUS.

Dead ! by what hand, his father's or his own ?

MESSENGER.

Enrag'd and grieving for his murther'd love
He slew himself.

CHORUS.

O ! prophet, thy perditions
Were but too true !

MESSENGER.

Since thus it be, 'tis fit
We shou'd consult ; our present state demands it.

CHO-

They are dead. The most correct ancient tragic writers, probably the better to preserve the unities, generally throw the principal circumstances of the catastrophe into narration ; the moderns, for reasons sufficiently obvious, bring the whole into action ; much may be said in defence of the methods used by both. Leaving this question therefore to be determined by the critics, I shall only add, that in regard to the denouement of the Antigone, nothing can be more simple, or natural ; the consequence of Creon's cruelty, and his too late repentance, brings on the death of Antigone, Hæmon, and Eurydice. Poetical justice is strictly observed ; the unfortunate Creon suffers as a king, as a husband, and as a father ; and in spite of all his crimes becomes an object of compassion. Thus terror and pity are both effectually raised, the one by his exemplary punishment, and the other by his unparalleled misfortunes.

CHORUS.

But see, Eurydice the wretched wife
Of Creon comes this way ; or chance hath brought her,
Or Hæmon's hapless fate hath reach'd her ear.

SCENE II.

EURYDICE, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

EURYDICE.

O! citizens, as to Minerva's fane
Ev'n now I went to pay my vows, the doors
I burst, and heard imperfectly the sound
Of most disastrous news which touch'd me near,
Breathless I fell amidst the virgin throng,
And now I come to know the dreadful truth ;
Whate'er it be, I'll hear it now ; for O!
I am no stranger to calamity.

MESSENGER.

Then mark, my mistress, I will tell thee all,
Nor will I pass a circumstance unmention'd.
Shou'd I deceive thee with an idle tale
'Twere soon discover'd ; truth is always best.
Know then, I follow'd Creon to the field,
Where torn by dogs the wretched carcase lay
Of Polynices, (first to Proserpine

And

O! citizens, &c. As the queen is going out to the temple of Minerva, she opens the door, and overhears the messenger relating to the chorus the death of Hæmon ; she faints at the news, and as soon as recovered enters with impatience to know the truth of it. Sophocles never brings his characters on the stage without some preparation and a reason for their appearance there ; a conduct, which I would recommend to our modern dramatic writers for their imitation.

And angry Pluto, to appease their wrath,
Our humble pray'rs addressing) there we lav'd
In the pure stream the body, then with leaves
Fresh gather'd cov'ring burnt his poor remains,
And on the neighb'ring turf a tomb uprais'd;
Then tow'rs the virgin's rocky cave advanc'd,
When from the dreadful chamber a sad cry
As from afar was heard, a servant ran
To tell the king, and still as we approach'd,
The sound of sorrow from a voice unknown
And undistinguish'd issued forth. Alas!
Said Creon, am I then a faithful prophet?
And do I tread a more unhappy path
Than e'er I went before? It is my son,
I know his voice: but get ye to the door,
My servants, close, look thro' the stony heap,
Mark if it be so; is it Hæmon's voice,
Again he cry'd, or have the gods deceiv'd me?
Thus spoke the king: we, to our mournful lord
Obedient, look'd, and saw Antigone
Down in the deepest hollow of the cave
By her own vestments hung; close by her side
The wretched youth embracing in his arms
Her lifeless corse, weeping his father's crime,
His ravish'd bride, and horrid nuptial bed,
Creon beheld, and loud approaching cry'd,
What art thou doing? what's thy dreadful purpose?
What means my son? come forth, my Hæmon, come,
Thy father begs thee; with indignant eye
The youth look'd up, nor scornful deign'd an answer,
But silent drew his sword, and with fell rage
Struck at his father, who by flight escap'd
The blow, then on himself bent all his wrath,

Full

Full in his side the weapon fix'd, but still,
 Whilst life remain'd, on the soft bosom hung
 Of the dear maid, and his last spirit breath'd
 O'er her pale cheek discolour'd with his blood.
 Thus lay the wretched pair in death united,
 And celebrate their nuptials in the tomb.
 To future times a terrible example
 Of the sad woes which rashness ever brings.

[Exit Eurydice.

SCENE III.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

What can this mean? she's gone, without a word.

MESSENGER.

'Tis strange, and yet I trust she will not loud
 Proclaim her griefs to all, but, for I know
 She's ever prudent, with her virgin train
 In secret weep her murder'd Hæmon's fate.

VOL. II.

F

CHO.

Whilst life remain'd, &c. The death of the two lovers is finely described, and the circumstances of it remarkably natural and affecting. I doubt whether Otway himself, with all his tenderness, could have drawn a more striking picture.

She's gone, &c. The silence and departure of Eurydice, on hearing the news of her son's death, are extremely judicious, and more expressive of her feelings on the occasion than words could possibly have made it "cure leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent." When OEdipus is discovered to be the murderer of his father, Jocasta acts in the same manner. A modern writer would perhaps have lengthen'd out this scene with complaints and declamation; but Sophocles (to speak in the language of Shakspear) never o'ersteps the modesty of nature; his faithful mirror reflects all her features without magnifying, diminishing, or distorting them.

CHORUS.

Clamour indeed were vain ; but such deep silence
Doth ever threaten horrid consequence.

MESSENGER.

Within we soon shall know if aught she hide
Of deadly purport in her angry soul ;
For well thou say'st her silence is most dreadful.

[Exit Messenger.]

CHORUS.

But lo ! the king himself, and in his arms
See his dead son, the monument accurs'd
Of his sad fate, which, may we say unblamed,
Sprang not from others guilt but from his own.

SCENE IV.

CREON, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

[Creon enters bearing the body of Hamon]

CREON.

Ah me ! what deadly woes from the bad mind
Perpetual flow ; thus in one wretched house
Have you beheld the slayer and the slain !
O fatal counsels ! O unhappy son !
Thus with thy youthful bride to sink in death ;
Thou dy'st, my child, and I alone have kill'd thee.

CHO.

In his arms, &c. It is plain from these words, which are literally translated from the original, that Creon enters bearing the body of his dead son. Sophocles, we may imagine, thought it would heighten the distress. Shakespear was of the same opinion, and brings in Lear with Cordelia in his arms ; though in Tate's alteration of it, which is always ridiculously followed in the representation, this circumstance is omitted.

ANTIGONE.

67

CHORUS.

O king, thy justice comes too late.

CREON.

It doth,

I know it well, unhappy as I am;
For O! the god this heavy weight of woe
Hath cast upon me, and his fiercest wrath
Torments me now, changing my joyful state
To keenest anguish; O! the fruitless toils
Of wretched mortals!

SCENE V.

MESSENGER, CREON, CHORUS.

MESSENGER.

Thus oppress'd, my lord,
With bitterest misfortune, more affliction
Awaits thee still, which thou wilt find within.

CREON.

And can there be more woes? is aught to come
More horrible than this?

MESSENGER.

The queen is dead;
Her wounds yet fresh, eager alas! to shew
A mother's love, she follow'd her lost child.

CREON.

O death insatiate! how dost thou afflict me!
What cruel news, thou messenger of ill,
Hast thou brought now?

CHORUS.

A wretch, already dead
With grief, thy horrid tale once more hath slain.

F 2

CREON.

CREON.

Didst thou not say a fresh calamity
Had fall'n upon me? didst not say my wife
Was dead, alas! for grief of Hæmon's fate?

[Scene opens and discovers the body of Eurydice.]

MESSENGER.

Behold her there.

CREON.

O me! another blow!

What now remains? what can I suffer more,
Thus bearing in these arms my breathless son?
My wife too dead! O! most unhappy mother.
And O! thou wretched child?

MESSENGER.

Close by the altar

She drew the sword, and clos'd her eyes in death,
Lamenting first her lost Megareus' fate
And Hæmon's death, with imprecations dire
Still pour'd on thee, the murth'rer of thy son.

CREON.

I shudder at it: will no friendly hand
Destroy me quick? for O! I am most wretched;
Beset with mis'ries!

MESSENGER.

She accus'd thee oft,

And said the guilt of both their deaths was thine.

CREON.

Alas! I only am to blame; 'twas I
Who kill'd thee, Hæmon; I confess my crime;
Bear me, my servants, bear me far from hence
For I am ---- nothing.

CHO-

Megareus' fate. Megareus was the first husband of Eurydice.

CHORUS.

If in ills like these
Aught can be well, thou hast determin'd right:
When least we see our woes, we feel them least.

CREON.

Quick let my last my happiest hour appear;
Wou'd it were come, the period of my woes!
O! that I might not see another day!

CHORUS.

Time must determine that: the present hour
Demands our care; the rest be left to heav'n.

CREON.

But I have wish'd and pray'd for't.

CHORUS.

Pray for nothing;
There's no reversing the decrees of fate.

CREON.

Take hence this useless load, this guilty wretch
Who slew his child, who slew e'en thee, my wife;
I know nōt whither to betake me, where
To turn my eyes, for all is dreadful round me,
And fate hath weigh'd me down on every side.

CHORUS.

Wisdom alone is man's true happiness;
We are not to dispute the will of heav'n;
For ever are the boastings of the proud
By the just gods repay'd, and man at last
Is taught to fear their anger, and be wise.

F 3

And man, &c. This moral reflection, naturally arising from the
action of the drama, concludes the tragedy of Antigone; a piece,
which for the conduct of its plot, the justness of its characters,
and

and the propriety of its sentiments and expressions cannot be too much admired. That simplicity, and want of incidents, which modern critics may condemn, were probably among those beauties which recommended it to the favour of antiquity: it met with remarkable success on the Athenian stage, having been represented there (according to Aristophanes the grammarian) two and thirty times, and was looked on as so considerable a testimony of the author's merit, as to procure for him in reward the government of Samos.

ANTIGONE

...of the Antigone and Creon cannot be too
...the Antigone and Creon, which
...were probably among those people
...to the favour of Antigone. It was with re-
...the Antigone, having been represented
...two and thirty
...of the
...the government of



TRACHINÆ.



Dramatis Personæ.

HERCULES.

HYLLUS, his son.

DEIANIRA, wife of HERCULES.

LICHAS, a Herald.

ATTENDANT on DEIANIRA.

NURSE.

OLD MAN.

MESSENGER.

CHORUS,

Composed of VIRGINS of Trachis.

SCENE before the palace of CEYX in Trachis.

TRACHINIAE.

A C T I.

S C E N E I.

DEIANIRA, ATTENDANT.

DEIANIRA.

OF antient fame, and long for truth receiv'd,
 Hath been the maxim, that nor good nor ill
 Can mortal life be call'd before we die;
 Alas! it is not so; for, O! my friends,
 E'er to the shades of Orcus I descend,
 Too well I know that Deianira's life
 Hath ever been, and ever must be wretched:
 Whilst in my native Pleuron Æneus watch'd
 My tender years with kind paternal care,

If

Trachiniae. The titles of the antient tragedies were usually given them either from the persons concerned, the business of the drama, or the place where it was transacted: the Trachiniae is so called from Trachis, a small country of Phthiotis in Thessaly: to this place, Deianira had accompanied Hercules in his voluntary banishment, and remained under the protection of Ceyx the king, during the absence of her husband on his expedition to Oechalia.

Nor good, nor ill, &c. This observation is generally attributed to Solon, who lived long after Deianira; Sophocles is therefore here accused of an anachronism; but as the remark is no less obvious than true, we need not be surpris'd to find it quoted as proverbial, even in the earliest ages.

Pleuron. A city of Ætolia, and the residence of Æneus, king of that country, and father of Deianira.

If ever woman suffer'd from the dread
 Of hated nuptials, I endur'd the worst
 And bitt'rest woes, when Achelous came,
 The river-god, to ask a father's voice
 And snatch'd me to his arms; with triple form
 He came affrighting; now, to fight appear'd
 A bull, and now with motley scales adorn'd
 A wreathed serpent, now with human shape
 And bestial head united; from his beard,
 Shadow'd with hair, as from a fountain, drip'd
 The ever-flowing water; horrid form!
 This to escape, my pray'rs incessant rose,
 That I might rather die than e'er approach
 His hated bed, when, lo! the welcome hour,
 Tho' late, arriv'd, that brought the son of Jove
 And fair Alcmena to my aid; he came,
 He fought, he free'd me; how the battle pass'd
 Who unconcern'd beheld it best can tell;
 Alas! I saw it not, oppress'd with fear,
 Left from my fatal beauty shou'd arise
 Some sad event; at length, deciding Jove
 Gave to the doubtful fight a happy end,
 If I may call it so; for, since the hour
 That gave me to Alcides' wish'd-for bed,
 Fears rise on fears; still is my anxious heart
 Solicitous for him; oft times the night,

Which

Achelous. A famous river, arising out of mount Pindus, and dividing Ætolia from Acarnania; the fabulous account of his person and power, is received by the antient poets, and explain'd by the mythologists; for a full detail of this extraordinary courtship, the reader may turn to the instructive Ovid. See met. b. 9.

Oft-times the night, &c. Ovid had probably this passage of Sophocles

Which brings him to me, bears him from my arms
To other labours, and a second toil:
Our children too, alas! he sees them not,
But as the husbandman who ne'er beholds
His distant lands, save at the needful time
Of seed or harvest; wand'ring thus, and thus
Returning ever, is he sent to serve
I know not whom; when crown'd with victory,
Then most my fears prevail; for since he slew

The

phocles before him, when he wrote the following lines in his epistle
from Deianira to Hercules,

Vir mihi semper abest, & conjuge notior hospes,
Monstraque, terribiles persequiturque feras;
Ipsa domo vacua votis operata puditis
Torqueor, infesto ne vir ab hoste cadat;
Inter serpentes, aprosque avidosque leones
Jactor, & efuros terna per ora canes.

See Ep. 9.

I know not whom. Probably Eurytheus, King of Mycenæ.

-----Duros mille labores

Rege sub Eurytheo, fatis junonis iniquæ,
Pertulit.

VIRG. ÆN. 7.

The fates having, it seems, decreed before the birth of Hercules and Eurytheus, that the first born of them should rule over the other, the implacable Juno, who was resolved to revenge the infidelity of Jupiter on his offspring, contrived (no very difficult matter indeed for the goddess of child-birth) to bring Eurytheus into the world first, who accordingly took the lead, made use of his privilege, and imposed on the noble Hercules what tasks he thought proper: for an account of his most distinguish'd labours, my readers may turn to the faithful chronicles of Ovid. See Met. b. 9.

Since he slew, &c. Iphitus, (as the story is told by Homer, in the *Odyssey*) was the son of Eurytus, and slain by Hercules, who, being a guest at his court, broke through the laws of hospitality, and murder'd the young prince, in order to possess himself of some
beautiful

The valiant Iphitus, at Trachis here
 We live in exile with our gen'rous friend,
 The hospitable Ceyx; he mean-time
 Is gone, and none can tell me where; he went
 And left me most unhappy; O! some ill
 Hath sure befall'n him! for no little time
 Hath he been absent; 'tis full fifteen moons
 Since I beheld him, and no messenger
 Is come to Deianira; some misfortune
 Doubtless hath happen'd, for he left behind
 A dreadful scroll: O! I have pray'd the gods
 A thousand times it may contain no ill.

A T T E N D A N T.

My royal mistress, long have I beheld
 Thy tears and sorrows for thy lost Alcides;
 But if the counsels of a slave might claim
 Attention, I won'd speak, wou'd ask thee wherefore

Amongst

beautiful mares, which, after the commission of this fact, he took away with him: Sophocles (as we shall find in the second act) has varied this circumstance.

According to Brumoy, who takes it from the commentators, the person slain by Hercules was a young man, a relation of Æneus, our hero's father-in-law; the murder was by a casual blow, and unpremeditated: Hercules notwithstanding, according to the custom of his country, submitted to a voluntary banishment for one year, having conducted Deianira and his family to Trachis, and committed them to the care of Ceyx, as mentioned by Hesiod.

Τρηχίνα δὲ τοὶ παρελαύνον

Ες κηρυὰ ἀνακτα

My royal mistress, &c. The first introduction of confidantes on the stage has by some been attributed to the French writers; the scene before us is, however, a proof that it is of much more ancient original: in the moderns it is perhaps more excusable, because the chorus of the Greeks seem to have rendered it altogether unnecessary.

Amongst thy sons, a num'rous progeny,
None hath been sent in search of him, and chief
Thy Hyllus, if he holds a father's health
And safety dear : but, ev'n as we cou'd wish.
Behold him here, if what I have advis'd
Seem fitting, he is come in happiest hour
To execute our purpose.

S C E N E II.

HYLLUS, DEIANIRA, ATTENDANT.

DEIANIRA.

O! my son,
Oft from the meanest tongue the words of truth
And safety flow ; this woman, tho' a slave,
Hath spoke what wou'd have well become the mouth
Of freedom's self to utter.

HYLLUS.

May I know

What she hath said ?

DEIANIRA.

She says it doth reflect
Disgrace on thee, thy father so long absent,
Not to have gain'd some knowledge of his fate.

HYLLUS.

I have already, if I may rely
On what report hath said of him.

DEIANIRA.

O! where,
Where is he then, my son ?

HYLLUS.

These twelve months past,

If

If fame say true, a Lydian woman held him
In shameful servitude.

DEIANIRA.

If it be so,

May ev'ry tongue reproach him!

HYLLUS.

But I hear

He now is free.

DEIANIRA.

And where doth rumour say

He is? alive or dead?

HYLLUS.

'Tis said, he leads

Or means to lead his forces tow'nds Euboea,

The land of Eurytus.

DEIANIRA.

Alas! my son,

Dost thou not know the oracles he left

Touching that kingdom?

HYLLUS.

No, I know not of them;

What were they?

DEIANIRA.

There, he said, or he shou'd die,

Or, if he shou'd survive, his life to come

Wou'd all be happy: wilt thou not, my son,

In this important crisis strive to aid

Thy father? if he lives, we too shall live

In safety: if he dies, we perish with him.

HYLLUS.

Mother, I go; long since I had been there

But that the oracle did never reach

Mine ears before; mean-time that happy fate,

Which

Which on my father ever wont to smile
Propitious, thou'd not suffer us to fear;
Thus far inform'd, I will not let the means
Of truth escape me, but will know it all.

DEIANIRA.

Haste then away, my son, and know, good deeds
Tho' late perform'd are crown'd with sure success.

SCENE III.

CHORUS, DEIANIRA, ATTENDANT.

STROPHE I.

On thee we call, great god of day,
To whom the night, with all her starry train,
Yields her solitary reign,
To send us some propitious ray:
Say thou, whose all-beholding eye
Doth nature's every part descry,
What dang'rous ocean, or what land unknown
From Deianira keeps Alcmena's valiant son.

ANTISTROPHE I.

For she nor joy nor comfort knows,
But weeps her absent lord, and vainly tries
To close her ever-streaming eyes,
Or sooth her sorrows to repose:

Like

On thee we call, &c. This is the first appearance of the chorus, composed most properly of the principal virgins of Trachis, who come in to condole with the afflicted Deianira, and offer up a beautiful address to Apollo, in which are intermix'd, according to the custom of the antients, moral reflections on the instability of human affairs. The whole song naturally arises from the circumstances of the drama, and is, according to Horace's rule, of a piece with the business of it.

Like the sad bird of night, alone
 She makes her solitary moan;
 And still, as on her widow'd bed reclin'd
 She lyes, unnumber'd fears perplex her anxious mind.

S T R O P H E II.

Ev'n as the troubled billows roar,
 When angry Boreas rules th' inclement skies,
 And waves on waves tumultuous rise
 To lash the Cretan shore:
 Thus sorrows still on sorrows press,
 Fill the great Alcides' breast;
 Unfading yet shall his fair virtues bloom,
 And some protecting god preserve him from the tomb.

A N T I S T R O P H E II.

Wherefore, to better thoughts inclin'd
 Let us with hope's fair prospect fill thy breast,
 Calm thy anxious thoughts to rest,
 And ease thy troubled mind:
 No bliss on man, unmix'd with woe,
 Doth Jove, great lord of all, bestow;
 But good with ill and pleasure still with pain,
 Like heaven's revolving signs, alternate reign.

E P O D E.

Not always do the shades of night remain,
 Nor ever with hard fate is man oppress'd;
 The wealth that leaves us may return again,
 Sorrow and joy successive fill the breast;
 Fearless then of every ill,
 Let chearful hope support thee still:
 Remember, queen, there is a pow'r above;
 And when did the great father, careful Jove,
 Forget his children dear, and kind paternal love?

DEIANIRA.

The same, it seems, of Deianira's woes
 Hath reach'd thine ears, but, O! thou little know'st
 What I have suffer'd; thou hast never felt
 Sorrows like mine; and long may be the time
 E'er sad experience shall afflict thy soul
 With equal woes! alas! the youthful maid
 In flow'ry pastures still exulting feeds,
 Nor feels the scorching sun, the wint'ry storm,
 Or blast of angry winds; secure she leads
 A life of pleasure, void of ev'ry care,
 Till to the virgin's happy state succeeds
 The name of wife; then shall her portion come
 Of pain and anguish, then her terrors rise
 For husband and for children; then perchance
 You too may know what 'tis to be unhappy,
 And judge of my misfortunes by your own.
 Long since oppress'd by many a bitter woe,
 Oft have I wept, but this transcends them all;
 For I will tell thee, when Alcides last
 Forth on his journey went, he left behind
 An antient scroll; alas! before that time
 In all his labours he did never use
 To speak as one who thought of death, secure
 Always he seem'd of victory, but now
 This writing marks as if he were to die,
 The portion out reserv'd for me, and wills
 His children to divide th' inheritance;
 Fixes the time, in fifteen moons, it says,

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He

The youthful maid, &c. Horace has caught this image.

Quæ velut latis equa trima campis,

Ludit exultim, metuitque tangi,

Nuptiarum expers.

B. 3. Od. 11.

He shou'd return ; that past, or he must perish,
 Or, if he 'scape the fatal hour, thenceforth
 Shou'd lead a life of happiness and joy :
 Thus had the gods, it said, decreed, his life
 And toils shou'd end ; so from their antient beach
 Dodona's doves foretold : th' appointed hour
 Approaches that must bring th' event, ev'n now,
 My friends, and therefore nightly do I start
 From my sweet slumbers, struck with deadly fear,
 Left I shou'd lose the dearest best of men.

C H O R U S.

Of better omen be thy words ; behold
 A messenger, who bears (for on his brow
 I see the laurel crown) some joyful news.

S C E N E IV.

MESSENGER, DEIANIRA, ATTENDANT,
 CHORUS.

M E S S E N G E R.

I come, my royal mistress, to remove

Thy

Dodona's doves. At Dodona, a city of Chaonia in Epirus, was a temple dedicated to Jupiter Dodoneus, and in a grove near it a beach-tree on which two doves sat and prophecy'd : the scholiast, in this place, turns the doves into old women, because the word *πελεια* is not far from *παιλαι*, and therefore may signify grey : the opinion of Eustathius is rather more rational, who supposes these doves to have been the priestesses of Jupiter, and so called, because they made their predictions by the observation of those birds ; a much better conceit than that of Herodotus, who very gravely assures us, that the old women were called doves, because their language was barbarous, and as unintelligible as that of birds ; and for the same reason they might as well have been called partridges or quails.

Thy fears, and bring the first glad tidings to thee,
To tell thee that Alcmena's son returns
With life and victory; ev'n now he comes
To lay before his country's gods the spoils
Of glorious war.

DEIANIRA.

What dost thou say, old man?

What dost thou tell me?

MESSENGER.

That thy dear Alcides,

Thy valiant lord, with his victorious bands,
Will soon attend thee.

DEIANIRA.

From our citizens

Didst thou learn this, or from a stranger's tongue?

MESSENGER.

The herald Lichas, in yon flow'ry yale,
But now reported, and I fled impatient
Soon as I heard it, that I first might tell thee
And be rewarded for the welcome tale.

DEIANIRA.

But wherefore tarries Lichas, if he bring
Glad tidings to me?

MESSENGER.

'Tis impossible

To reach thee, for the Melian people throng
Around him, not a man but longs to know
Some news of thy Alcides, stops his journey,
Nor will release him till he hear it all;
Spite of himself he waits to satisfy
Their eager doubts; but thou wilt see him soon.

DEIANIRA.

O! thou, who dwell'st on OËta's sacred top,

G 2 Immortal

Immortal Jove! at length, tho' late, thou giv'st
 The wish'd-for boon; let ev'ry female now,
 You that within the palace do reside,
 And you, my followers here, with shouts proclaim
 The blest event! for, lo! a beam of joy,
 I little hop'd, breaks forth, and we are happy.

STROPHE.

Quick let sounds of mirth and joy
 Ev'ry chearful hour employ;
 Haste, and join the festive song,
 You, who lead the youthful throng,
 On whom the smiles of prosp'rous fate,
 And Hymen's promis'd pleasures wait,
 Now all your Io Pæan's sing,
 To Phœbus, your protector and your king.

ANTISTROPHE.

And you, ye virgin train, attend,
 Not unmindful of your friend,
 His sister huntress of the groves,
 Who still her native Delos loves,
 Prepare the dance, and choral lays,
 To hymn the chaste Diana's praise;
 To her, and her attendant choir
 Of mountain-nymphs, attune the votive lyre.

EPODE.

Quick let sounds, &c. This second song of the chorus is a hymn of thanksgiving to Apollo and Diana. Deianira, on the agreeable news of her husband's arrival, calls together her friends and servants to partake of her happiness; it was probably accompanied both with music and dancing, ad tibiam, says Camerarius, choream agitatam apparet; I have endeavoured to adapt the English measure to the festivity of the subject; those who contend for the division into acts as parted by the songs of the chorus, will please to remember this is the second intermede.

EPODE.

Already hath the god possess'd
My soul, and rules the sov'reign of my breast;
Evoe, Bacchus! lo! I come to join
Thy throng; around me doth the Thyrsus twine,
And I am fill'd with rage divine;
See! the glad messenger appears
To calm thy doubts, and to remove thy fears;
Let us our Io Pæan's sing
To Phœbus, our protector and our king.

A C T II.

SCENE I.

DEIANIRA, CHORUS.

DEIANIRA.

THES E eyes deceive me, friends, or I behold
A crowd approach this way, and with them comes
The herald Lichas: let me welcome him,
If he bring joyful news.

SCENE II.

LICHAS, IOLE, SLAVES, DEIANIRA, CHORUS.

LICHAS.

My royal mistress,

G 3

We

Sov'reign of my breast. Almost a literal translation of 'Τυραννὴς
'*tyrant of my soul*;' an expression which carries
with it a remarkably modern air, and much in the stile of our dra-
matic lovers.

We greet thee with fair tidings of success,
And therefore shall our words deserve thy praise.

DEIANIRA.

O! thou dear messenger, inform me first
What first I wish to know, my lov'd Alcides,
Doth he yet live, shall I again behold him?

LICHAS.

I left him well; in health and manly strength
Exulting.

DEIANIRA.

Where? in his own native land,
Or 'midst Barbarians?

LICHAS.

On Eubœa's shore
He waits, with various fruits to crown the altar,
And pay due honours to Cœnean Jove.

DEIANIRA.

Commanded by some oracle divine
Performs he this, or means but to fulfil
A vow of gratitude for conquest gain'd?

LICHAS.

For vict'ry o'er the land, whence we have brought
These captive women, whom thou see'st before thee.

DEIANIRA.

Whence come the wretched slaves? for, if I judge
Their state aright, they must indeed be wretched.

L I-

Cœnean Jove. So called from Cœnæum, a promontory in Eubœa, where altars were raised, and sacrifice offered up to him. The heathens, after victory, never omitted paying their grateful acknowledgments to the supreme power: though mistaken in the object of their worship, they are, perhaps, not unworthy of our imitation in their punctual and devout performance of it.

LICHAS.

Know, when Alcides had laid waste the city
Of Eurytus, to him and to the gods
Were these devoted.

DEIANIRA.

In Oechalia then

Hath my Alcides been this long time?

LICHAS.

Not so: in Lydia, (as himself reports)
Was he detain'd a slave; so Jove ordain'd;
And who shall blame the high decrees of Jove?
Sold to barbarian Omphale, he serv'd
Twelve tedious months; ill brook'd he the foul shame;
Then in his wrath he made a solemn vow
He wou'd revenge the wrong on the base author,
And bind in chains his wife and all his race:
Nor fruitless the resolve, for when the year
Of slav'ry past had expiated the crime
Imputed, soon with gather'd force he march'd
'Gainst the devoted Eurytus, the cause
(For so he deem'd him) of those hateful bonds;
Within his palace he had erst receiv'd

G 4

Alcides,

Omphale. A queen of Lydia. Hercules, who, like many other heroes was a dupe to women, became so enamoured of her as to submit to every task which she thought proper to impose on him; she found him a willing slave and treated him accordingly, put a distaff in his hands, and sent him to spin with her maids. This fact, according to general tradition, was prior to his marriage with Deianira: Sophocles, however, has taken the poetical liberty to change the time as most agreeable to his purpose. Lichas softens the matter to Deianira, and makes it an involuntary servitude; though he well knew that his master had in reality sold himself. He calls her Barbarian Omphale, because the Greeks looked on all nations but themselves as such.

Alcides, but with bitt'rest taunts revil'd him,
 Boasting, in spite of his all-conqu'ring arrows,
 His son's superior skill, and said, a slave
 Like him shou'd bend beneath a freeman's pow'r;
 Then 'midst the banquet's mirth, inflam'd with wine,
 Cast forth his antient guest; this to revenge
 When Iphitus to search his pastur'd steeds
 Came to Tyrinthia, Hercules surpris'd,
 And, as he turn'd his wand'ring eyes aside,
 Hurl'd head-long from the mountain's top; great Jove,
 Father of men, from high Olympus saw
 And disapprov'd the deed, unworthy him
 Who ne'er before by fraud destroy'd his foes;
 With open force had he reveng'd the wrong,
 Jove had forgiv'n, but violence conceal'd
 The gods abhor, and therefore was he sold
 To slav'ry; Eurytus' unhappy sons
 Were punish'd too, and dwell in Erebus;
 Their city is destroy'd, and they, whom here
 Thou see'st, from freedom and prosperity,
 Reduc'd to wretchedness; to thee they come,
 Such was Alcides' will; which I, his slave,
 Have faithfully perform'd; himself e'er long
 Thou shalt behold, when to paternal Jove
 He hath fulfill'd his vows: thus my long tale
 Ends with the welcom'st news which thou cou'd'st hear,
 Alcides comes.

C H O-

Hurl'd headlong, &c. 'It is surprising (says Brumoy) that Sophocles should impute such an action to his hero, even in an account that is afterwards found to be fictitious.' But the French critic forgets that he had a foundation for this story in Homer, as we observed in a former note.

CHORUS.

O! queen, thy happiness
Is great indeed, to see these slaves before thee,
And know thy lord approaches.

DEIANIRA.

I am happy:

To see my Hercules with vict'ry crown'd
'Tis fit I shou'd rejoice; and yet, my friends,
If we consider well, we still shou'd fear
For the successful, lest they fall from bliss.
It moves my pity much when I behold
These wretched captives in a foreign land
Without a parent, and without a home,
Thus doom'd to slav'ry here, who once perhaps
Enjoy'd fair freedom's best inheritance:
O! Jove, averter of each mortal ill,
Let not my children ever feel thy arm
Thus rais'd against them! or, if 'tis decreed,
Let it not be whilst Deianira lives:
The sight of these alarms my fears: but tell me
Thou poor afflicted captive, who thou art; [to Iole.
Art thou a mother? or, as by thy years
Thou seem'st, a virgin, and of noble birth?
Can'st not thou tell me, Lichas, whence she sprang?
Inform me, for, of all these slaves, she most
Hath won my pity, and in her alone
Have I observ'd a firm and gen'rous mind.

LICHAS.

Why ask of me? I know not who she is;
Perhaps of no mean rank.

DEIANIRA.

The royal race
Of Eurytus?

TRACHINIAE.

LICHAS.

I know not, nor did e'er! O

Inquire.

DEIANIRA.

And did'st thou never hear her name

From her companions?

LICHAS.

Never. I perform'd

My work in silence.

DEIANIRA.

Tell me then thyself,

Thou wretched maid, for I am most unhappy

Till I know who thou art.

LICHAS.

She will not speak;

I know she will not; not a word hath pass'd

Her lips, e'er since she left her native land,

But still in tears the hapless virgin mourns

The burthen of her sad calamity;

Her fate is hard: she merits your forgiveness.

DEIANIRA.

Let her go in: I'll not disturb her peace,

Nor wou'd I heap fresh sorrows on her head,

She hath enough already: we'll retire.

Go where thou wilt; my cares within await me. [to Iole.

[Exeunt Lichas, Iole, and slaves.

SCENE

She will not speak. Nothing can be better imagined, or more artfully contrived, than the concern which Deianira expresses for Iole: the youth, beauty, and modesty of the fair captive plead strongly in her behalf, and the Queen is, as it were, enamoured of her rival. She is anxious to know who and what she is; but Iole, whose business it was to conceal herself, remains silent. Cassandra behaves in the same manner with regard to Clytemnestra, in the Agamemnon of Æschylus.

SCENE III.

MESSENGER, DEIANIRA, CHORUS.

MESSENGER.

Stay thee awhile. I have a tale to tell
Touching these captives, which imports thee nearly,
And I alone am able to inform thee.

DEIANIRA.

What dost thou know? and why woud'st thou detain me?

MESSENGER.

Return, and hear me; when I spake before
I did not speak in vain, nor shall I now.

DEIANIRA.

Woud'st thou I call them back, or mean'st to tell
Thy secret purpose here to me alone?

MESSENGER.

To thee, and these thy friends, no more.

DEIANIRA.

They're gone;

Now speak in safety.

MESSENGER.

Lichas is dishonest,
And either now, or when I saw him last
Hath utter'd falsehood.

DEIANIRA.

Ha? what dost thou say?

I understand thee not, explain it quickly.

MES-

Stay thee awhile. This is the same messenger who appeared in the first act to announce the arrival of Lichas: he is moved by the unhappy situation of Deianira, and stops her, as she is going out, to disclose the secret to her, and acquaint her with the treachery of Lichas.

MESSENGER.

I heard him say, 'before attendant crouds,
 It was this virgin, this fair slave destroy'd
 OEchalia's lofty tow'rs, 'twas love alone
 That waged the war, no Lydian servitude,
 Nor Omphale, nor the pretended fall
 Of Iphitus (for so the tale he brings
 Wou'd fain persuade thee) know, thy own Alcides,
 For that he cou'd not gain th' assenting voice
 Of Eurytus to his unlawful love,
 Laid waste the city where her father reign'd,
 And slew him; now the daughter, as a slave,
 Is sent to thee; the reason is too plain,
 Nor think he meant her for a slave alone,
 The maid he loves, that wou'd be strange indeed;
 My royal mistress, most unwillingly
 Do I report th' unwelcome news, but thought
 It was my duty: I have told thee truth,
 And the Trachinians bear me witness of it.

DEIANIRA.

Wretch that I am! to what am I reserv'd?
 What hidden pestilence within my roof
 Have I receiv'd unknowing! hapless woman;
 She seem'd of beauteous form and noble birth;
 Have you not heard her name? for Lichas said
 He knew it not.

MESSENGER.

Daughter of Eurytus,
 Her name Iole; he had not enquir'd
 Touching her race.

CHORUS.

Perdition on the man,

Perdition on the man, &c. The chorus here throws an oblique reflection

Of all most wicked, who hath thus deceiv'd thee!

DEIANIRA.

What's to be done, my friend? this dreadful news

Afflicts me sorely.

CHORUS.

Go, and learn the whole

From his own lips, compel him to declare

The truth.

DEIANIRA.

I will; thou counsel'st me aright.

CHORUS.

Shall we attend you?

DEIANIRA.

No; for see he comes,

Uncall'd.

SCENE IV.

LICHAS, DEIANIRA, ATTENDANT,
MESSENGER, CHORUS.

LICHAS.

O! queen, what are thy last commands

To

reflection on Hercules for his falshood to Deianira; though it is so worded, probably with a purposed ambiguity, as to be applicable to the herald Lichas.

O queen, &c. The messenger's information having made the presence of Lichas on the stage immediately necessary, he is introduced with propriety to take his leave of Deianira, who embraces this opportunity to sound him with regard to the accusation, which she does with all the subtlety of a woman, and all the dignity of a queen, using every artifice to draw him into a confession, and at last persuading him to it by an affected indifference about her husband's fidelity.

To thy Alcides? for ev'n now I go
To meet him.

DEIANIRA.

Hast thou ta'en so long a journey
To Trachis, and wou'dst now so soon return,
E'er I can hold some further converse with thee?

LICHAS.

If thou wou'dst question me of aught, behold me
Ready to tell thee.

DEIANIRA.

Wilt thou tell me truth?

LICHAS.

In all I know; so bear me witness, Jove!

DEIANIRA.

Who is that woman thou hast brought?

LICHAS.

I hear

She's of Eubœa; for her race and name

I know them not.

DEIANIRA.

Look on me; who am I?

LICHAS.

Why ask me this?

DEIANIRA.

Be bold, and answer me.

LICHAS.

Daughter of OENEUS, wife of HERCULES,
If I am not deceiv'd, 'tis DEIANIRA,
My queen, my mistress.

DEI-

If I am not deceiv'd. This may, perhaps, appear odd to the English reader, but it is almost a literal translation of the original, 'εἰ μὴ κρυπὸν λέυκα ματαῖα,' nisi perperam video, nisi oculi me fallunt.

DEIANIRA.

Am I so indeed?

Am I thy mistress?

LICHAS.

Doubtless.

DEIANIRA.

Why, 'tis well

Thou dost confess it: then what punishment

Wou'dst thou deserve, if thou wer't faithless to her?

LICHAS.

How faithless? mean'st thou to betray me?

DEIANIRA.

No;

The fraud is thine.

LICHAS.

'Twas folly thus to stay

And hear thee; I must hence.

DEIANIRA.

Thou shalt not go

Till I have ask'd thee one short question.

LICHAS.

Ask it,

For so it seems thou art resolv'd.

DEIANIRA.

Inform me;

This captive, dost thou know her?

LICHAS.

I have told thee;

What wou'dst thou more?

DEI-

For so it seems. The Greek is, *στυγνός εἰ*, 'you are not very
silent, or, not much given to silence;' a kind of impertinent fa-
miliarity from a servant to a mistress which modern delicacy would
scarce admit; I have therefore softened it a little in the translation.

DEIANIRA.

Didst thou not say, this slave,
Tho' now, it seems, thou know'st her not, was daughter
Of Eurytus, her name Iole?

LICHAS.

Where?

To whom did I say this? what witness have you?

DEIANIRA.

Assembled multitudes; the citizens
Of Trachis heard thee.

LICHAS.

They might say they heard
Reports like these; but must it therefore seem
A truth undoubted?

DEIANIRA.

Seem? didst thou not swear
That thou hadst brought this woman to partake
The bed of my Alcides?

LICHAS.

Did I say so?

But tell me who this stranger is.

DEIANIRA.

The man

Who heard thee say, Alcides' love for her,
And not the Lydian, laid the city waste.

LICHAS.

Let him come forth and prove it; 'tis no mark
Of wisdom thus to trifle with th' unhappy.

DEI-

This stranger. It is plain from hence, that the messenger, who had accused Lichas, remains on the stage during all this scene; Lichas bids him stand forth and make good his charge; Deianira prevents him, and takes a better method to bring him to confession.

DEIANIRA.

O! do not, I beseech thee by that pow'r,
 Whose thunders roll o'er OEta's lofty grove,
 Do not conceal the truth; thou speak'st to one
 Not unexperienc'd in the ways of men;
 To one who knows we cannot always joy
 In the same object: 'tis an idle task
 To take up arms against all-pow'rful love;
 Love which commands the gods; love conquer'd me,
 And wherefore shou'd it not subdue another,
 Whose nature and whose passions are the same?
 If my Alcides is indeed oppress'd
 With this sad malady, I blame him not;
 That were a folly; nor this hapless maid,
 Who meant no ill, no injury to me;
 'Tis not for this I speak; but, mark me well;
 If thou wert taught by him to utter falsehood,
 A vile and shameful lesson didst thou learn;
 And if thou art thy own instructor, know,
 Thou shalt seem wicked ev'n when most sincere,
 And never be believ'd; speak then the truth;
 For to be branded with the name of liar
 Is ignominy fit for slaves alone,
 And not for thee; nor think thou canst conceal it;
 Those who have heard the tale, will tell it me.
 If fear deters thee, thou hast little cause;
 For to suspect his falsehood is my grief,
 To know it, none; already have I seen
 Alcides' heart estrang'd to other loves,
 Yet did no rival ever hear from me
 One bitter word, nor will I now reproach
 This wretched slave, ev'n tho' she pines for him
 With strongest love: alas! I pity her,

Whose beauty thus hath been the fatal cause
Of all her mis'ry, laid her country waste,
And brought her here, far from her native land,
A helpless captive: but no more of this;
Only remember, if thou must be false,
Be false to others, but be true to me.

C H O R U S.

She speaks most kindly to thee; be persuaded;
Hereafter thou shalt find her not ungrateful;
We too will thank thee.

L I C H A S.

O! my dearest mistress,
Not unexperienc'd thou in human life,
Nor ignorant; and therefore nought from thee
Will I conceal, but tell thee all the truth:
'Tis as he said; and Hercules indeed
Doth love Iole: for her sake alone
OEchalia, her unhappy country, fell;
This, (for 'tis fit I tell thee) he confess'd,
Nor will'd me to conceal it; but I fear'd
'Twou'd pierce thy heart to hear th' unwelcome tale,
And therefore own I wou'd have kept it from thee;
That crime, if such it was, I have committed;
But since thou know'st it all, let me entreat thee,
For her sake and thy own, O! do not hate
This wretched captive, but remember well,
What thou hast promis'd, faithfully perform.
He, whose victorious arm hath conquer'd all,
Now yields to her, and is a slave to love.

D E I-

He, whose victorious arm, &c.

Quem nunquam Juno seriesque immensa laborum,
Fregerit, huic Iolen imposuisse jugum.

Ovid.

TRACHINIAE.

99

DEIANIRA.

'Tis my resolve to act as thou adviest;
 I'll not resist the gods, nor add fresh weight
 To my calamity: let us go in,
 That thou may'st bear my orders to Alcides,
 And with them gifts in kind return for those
 We have receiv'd from him; thou must not hence
 With empty hand, who hither brought'st to me
 Such noble presents, and so fair a train. [Exeunt.

SCENE V.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Thee, Venus, gods and men obey,
 And universal is thy sway;
 Need I recount the pow'rs subdu'd by love?
 Neptune who shakes the solid ground,
 The king of Erebus profound,
 Or, the great lord of all, saturnian Jove?
 To mortals let the song descend,
 To pity our afflicted friend,
 And sooth the injur'd Deianira's woes:
 For her the angry rivals came,
 For her they felt an equal flame,
 For her, behold! the doubtful battle glows.

H 2

A N.

Thee, Venus, &c. This is the third intermede, or song of the chorus: my female readers will please to observe, that the gallant Sophocles has here given us another ode to love, which naturally introduces an account of the combat of Hercules and Achelous for Deianira, the heroine of the drama.

A N T I S T R O P H E.

In dreadful majesty array'd,
 Affrighting sore the fearful maid,
 Uprose the horned monarch of the flood;
 He who through fair Ætolia's plain
 Pours his rich tribute to the main;
 A bull's tremendous form bely'd the god;
 From his own Thebes, to win her love,
 With him the happier son of Jove,
 The great Alcides came, and in his hand
 The club, the bow, and glitt'ring spear;
 Whilst Venus, to her vot'ries near,
 Wav'd o'er their heads her all-deciding wand.

E P O D E.

Warm and more warm the conflict grows,
 Dire was the noise of rattling bows,
 Of front to front oppos'd, and hand to hand;
 Deep was the animated strife
 For love, for conquest, and for life;
 Alternate groans re-echo'd thro' the land:
 Whilst pensive on the distant shore,
 She heard the doubtful battle roar,
 Many a sad tear the hapless virgin shed;
 Far from her tender mother's arms,
 She knows not yet for whom her charms
 She keeps, or who shall share her bridal bed.

[Exeunt.

A C T

A C T III.

S C E N E I.

DEIANIRA, CHORUS.

DEIANIRA.

MY guest, in pity to the captive train,
Laments their woes, and takes his kind farewell;
Mean-time, my friends, in secret came I here
To pour forth all my mis'ries, and impart
To you my inmost thoughts, my last resolve:
Alas! within these walls I have receiv'd,
Like the poor sailor, an unhappy freight
To sink me down, no virgin, but a wife,
The wife of my Alcides; his lov'd arms
Now must embrace us both: my faithful lord
(Faithful and good I thought him) thus rewards
My tender cares, and all the tedious toils
I suffer'd for him; but I will be calm;
For 'tis an evil I have felt before:
And yet to live with her! with her to share
My husband's bed! what woman cou'd support it!
Her youth is stealing onward to it's prime,
Whilst mine is wither'd and the eye, which longs
To pluck the op'ning flow'r from the dry leaf
Will turn aside; her younger charms, I fear,
Have conquer'd, and henceforth in name alone
Shall Deianira be Alcides' wife.
But ill do rage and violence become
The prudent matron; therefore, mark me well,
And hear what I have purpos'd, to relieve
My troubled heart: within a brazen urn,

Conceal'd from ev'ry eye, I long have kept
 That antient gift which Nessus did bequeath me,
 The hoary centaur, who was wont for hire
 To bear the trav'ller o'er the rapid flood
 Of deep Evenus, not with oars or sail
 He stem'd the torrent, but with nervous arm
 Oppos'd, and pass'd it: me, when first a bride
 I left my father's hospitable roof
 With my Alcides, in his arms he bore
 Athwart the current, half way o'er, he dar'd
 To offer violence, I shriek'd aloud;
 When lo! the son of Jove, his bow swift bent,
 Sent forth a shaft, and pierc'd the monster's breast,
 Who with his dying voice did thus address me,
 ' Daughter of OENEUS, listen to my words,
 ' So shalt thou profit by the last sad journey
 ' Which I shall ever go; if in thy hand
 ' Thou take the drops out-flowing from the wound
 ' This arrow made, dip'd in th' envenom'd blood
 ' Of the LERNÆAN hydra, with that charm
 ' May'st thou subdue the heart of thy Alcides,

Nor

Nessus. This story, which is the foundation of the piece before us, strip'd of all its poetical ornaments, is as follows. Nessus was one of that fabulous race called centaurs, half man and half horse; his usual employment was the carrying passengers over the river Evenus; Deianira entrusted herself to his care; the centaur fell in love with, and would have ravish'd her; Hercules perceiving his design, slew him with one of his arrows, poisoned with the blood of the LERNÆAN hydra: Nessus, to revenge himself on his rival, told Deianira in his last moments, that if ever her husband proved faithless, she might recall his love by dipping his garment in some of that blood which was then streaming from him; Deianira believed him, and preserved the philtre; the consequence of this forms the subject of the Trachiniae.

‘ Nor shall another ever gain his love :
Mindful of this, my friends, (for from that hour
In secret have I kept the precious gift)
Behold a garment dip’d ith’ very blood
He gave me, nor did I forget to add
What he enjoin’d, but have prepar’d it all;
I know no evil arts, nor wou’d I learn them,
For they who practise such are hateful to me;
I only wish the charm may be of pow’r
To win Alcides from this virgin’s love,
And bring him back to Deianira’s arms,
If ye shall deem it lawful, but if not
I’ll go no farther.

CHORUS.

Cou’d we be assur’d
Such is indeed th’ effect, ’tis well determin’d.

DEIANIRA.

I cannot but believe it, tho’ as yet
Experience never hath confirm’d it to me.

CHORUS.

Thou shoud’st be certain; thou but seem’st to know
If thou hast never try’d.

DEIANIRA.

I’ll try it soon;
For see ev’n now he comes out at the portal:
Let him not know our purpose; if the deed
Be wrong, concealment may prevent reproach:
Therefore be silent.

S C E N E II.

LICHAS, DEIANIRA, CHORUS.

LICHAS.

Speak thy last commands,

Daughter of OENEUS, for already long

Have we delay'd our journey.

DEIANIRA.

Know then, Lichas,

That whilst thou commun'dst with thy friends, myself

Have hither brought a garment which I wove

For my Alcides, thou must bear it to him;

Tell him, no mortal must with touch profane

Pollute the sacred gift, nor sun behold it,

Nor holy temple, nor domestic hearth,

E'er at the altar of paternal Jove

Himself shall wear it; 'twas my solemn vow

Whene'er he shou'd return, that, cloth'd in this,

He to the gods shou'd offer sacrifice.

Bear too this token, he will know it well;

Away: remember to perform thy office,

But go no farther, so shall double praise,

And favour from us both reward thy duty.

LICHAS.

If I have aught of skill, by Hermes right

Instructed

Nor sun behold it, &c. Deianira probably gave this caution because she imagined that the virtue of her charm wou'd be extracted by fire, and consequently, if held near that, wou'd have no effect when Hercules put it on.

This token. This token was a σφραγίς, or seal-ring, which Deianira sent with the vest, to convince Hercules that it came from her.

By Hermes, &c. Hermes or Mercury always appears as messenger of

Instructed in his art, I will not fail
To bear thy gift, and faithful to report
What thou hast said.

DEIANIRA.

Begone ; what here hath past
Thou know'st.

LICHAS.

I do ; and shall bear back the news
That all is well.

DEIANIRA.

Thou art thyself a witness
How kindly I receiv'd the guest he sent me.

LICHAS.

It fill'd my heart with pleasure to behold it.

DEIANIRA.

What can'st thou tell him more ? alas ! I fear
He'll know too well the love I bear to him ;
Wou'd I cou'd be as certain he'd return it !

[Exeunt.

SCENE III.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

You, who on Oeta's craggy summit dwell,

Or

of the gods, and favourite errand-boy of Jupiter ; he therefore naturally presided over mortal messengers, and is properly mentioned by the herald as his patron and instructor.

To bear thy gift. Ignaroque Lichæ, quid tradat nescia, luctus
Ipsa suos tradit.

says the elegant Ovid, who has told this story in a most agreeable manner in the ninth book of his metamorphosis.

You, who on Oeta's, &c. This is the fourth song or intermede
of

Or from the rock, whence gushing riv'lets flow,
 Bathe in the warmer springs below,
 You, who near the Melian bay
 To golden-shafted Diana hymn the lay,
 Now haste to string the lyre, and tune the vocal shell.

A N T I S T R O P H E I.

No mournful theme demands your pensive strain,
 But such as kindled by the sacred fire
 The muses might themselves admire,
 A loud and chearful song; for see,
 The son of Jove returns with victory,
 And richest spoils reward a life of toil and pain.

S T R O P H E II.

Far from his native land he took his way:

For

of the Chorus, who, rejoicing at the expected arrival of Hercules, invite the neighbouring youths and maidens to celebrate the festival, and welcome the returning conqueror.

Warmer springs, &c. It is reported that Vulcan first raised warm springs in Trachis or Sicily for the use of Hercules, whence warm baths were usually called *λῦτρα Ηρακλεια* 'Herculean Baths.'

The Melian bay, &c. The bay of Melis was not far from Trachis and adjoining to Artemisium, celebrated by the famous sea-fight between the Grecians and the Persians, on the same day with the battle of Thermopylæ; near it was a temple sacred to Diana.

Far from his native land, &c. The last Strophe and Antistrophe of this chorus are so drolly translated by Mr. Adams, that I cannot refuse my readers a sight of it. It runs as follows;

S T R O P H E II.

'He whom, absent from home twelve months, we waited for,
 'being on the rough sea, knowing nothing of him, but his dear
 'miserable wife, the wretched lady, with ever-streaming tears af-
 'flicted her sad heart; but now raging Mars hath finished the term
 'of his labours.'

A N T I-

For twelve long moons, uncertain of his fate,
 Did we lament his exil'd state,
 What time his anxious wife deplor'd
 With never ceasing tears her absent lord;
 But Mars at last hath clos'd his long laborious day.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Let him from fair Eubœa's isle appear;
 Let winds and raging seas oppose no more,
 But waft him to the wish'd-for shore;
 Th' anointed vest's persuasive charms
 Shall bring him soon to Deianira's arms,
 Soon shall we see the great the lov'd Alcides here.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

DEIANIRA, CHORUS.

DEIANIRA.

ALAS! my friends, I fear I've gone too far.

CHORUS.

Great queen, in what?

DEIANIRA.

I know not what; but dread
 Something to come, lest where I had most hope
 Of happiness, I meet with bitt'rest woe.

CHO.

ANTISTROPHE II.

' Let him come, nor let his ship stand still e'er he arrives at this
 ' city, leaving this island habitation, where he is said to sacrifice,
 ' whence let him come hastening all the day, clad with this well-
 ' besmeared coat of reconciliation of his love to Deianira, as the
 ' Centaur directed her.'

C H O R U S.

Mean'st thou thy gift to Hercules?

D E I A N I R A.

I do;

Nor wou'd I henceforth counsel those I lov'd

To do a dark and desp'rate deed like this,

Uncertain of th' event.

C H O R U S.

How was it? speak,

If thou can'st tell us.

D E I A N I R A.

O! 'twas wonderful!

For you shall hear it; know then, the white wool

Wherein I wrap'd th' anointed vest, untouch'd

By any hand, drop'd self-consum'd away,

And down the stone, ev'n like a liquid, flow'd

Dissolving: (but 'tis fit I tell you all)

Whate'er the wounded centaur did enjoin me

Mindful to practise, sacred as the laws

On brazen tablets grav'd, I have perform'd:

Far from the fire, and from the sun's warm beams

He bade me keep the charm, from ev'ry eye

In secret hid, till time shou'd call on me

T'anoint and use it: this was done; and now,

The fleece in secret pluck'd, the charm prepar'd,

Long

The white wool, &c. This wool was probably made use of as a sponge, with which, after dipping it in the blood, she wetted the magic robe; this imbibing the fiery and poisonous particles, on being exposed to the air, took fire, and consumed away, a circumstance which could not fail to alarm the fears of Deianira, who now begins to repent of her hazardous attempt: her remorse is naturally and pathetically described, and at the same time gradually prepares the audience for the catastrophe.

Long from the sun within a chest conceal'd,
 At length I brought it forth, and sent the gift
 To my Alcides, when behold a wonder,
 Most strange for tongue to tell, or heart of man
 Ev'n to conceive ! perchance the wool I cast
 Into the sunshine; soon as it grew warm
 It fell to dust, consuming all away
 In most strange manner, then from th' earth uprose
 In frothy bubbles, ev'n as from the grape
 In yellow autumn flows the purple wine:
 I know not what to think; but much I fear
 I've done a horrid deed: for, why, my friends,
 Why shou'd the dying savage wish to serve
 His murth'rer? that cou'd never be: O! no;
 He only meant by flatt'ry to destroy
 Me his destroyer: truth is come too late,
 And I alone have slain my dear Alcides.
 I know that by his arrows Chiron fell;
 I know whate'er they touch'd they still were fatal;
 That very poison mingled with the blood
 Of dying Nessus, will not that too kill
 My Hercules? it must: but if he dies,
 My resolution is to perish with him;
 Those, who their honour and their virtue prize,
 Can never live with infamy and shame.

C H O-

Chiron. Chiron was one of the Centaurs, and was wounded by Hercules with one of his arrows dip'd in the blood of the Hydra, the story is told at large in the fifth book of Ovid's *Fasts*. Deianira recollects that Hercules had slain Nessus also with one of the same arrows which she knew to be poisoned; the effect was the same on both, and the consequence but too visible with regard to Hercules himself.

C H O R U S.

'Tis fit we tremble at a deed of horror;
But 'tis not fitting, e'er, we know th' event,
To give up hope, and yield us to despair.

D E I A N I R A.

There is no hope where evil counsel's ta'en.

C H O R U S.

But when we err from ignorance alone,
Small is the crime, and slight the punishment;
Such is thy fault.

D E I A N I R A.

The guiltless may talk thus,
Who know no ill; not those, who are unhappy.

C H O R U S.

No more; unless thou mean'st thy son shou'd hear thee,
Who now returns in search of thy Alcides:
Behold him here.

S C E N E II.

H Y L L U S, D E I A N I R A, C H O R U S.

H Y L L U S.

O! wou'd that thou wert dead!
Wou'd I were not thy son! or, being so,
Wou'd I cou'd change thy wicked heart!

D E I A N I R A.

My son,

What means this passion?

H Y L L U S.

Thou hast slain thy husband;
This very day my father hast thou slain.

D E I-

DEIANIRA.

Alas ! my child, what say'st thou ?

HYLLUS.

What is past,

And therefore must be ; who can e'er undo

The deed that's done ?

DEIANIRA.

But who cou'd say I did it ?

HYLLUS.

I saw it with these eyes ; I heard it all

From his own lips.

DEIANIRA.

Where did'st thou see him then ?

Tell me, O ! quickly tell me.

HYLLUS.

If I must,

Observe me well : when Hercules, return'd
 From conquest, had laid waste the noble city
 Of Eurytus, with fair triumphal spoils
 He to Eubœa came, where o'er the sea,
 Which beats on ev'ry side, Cenzæum's top
 Hangs dreadful, thither to paternal Jove
 His new rais'd altars in the leafy wood
 He came to visit ; there did my glad eyes

Behold

There did my glad eyes, &c. It is observed, that the distance from Cenzæum to Trachis, is too great to admit of Hyllus's return in the short time which Sophocles has allowed him ; for how could Hyllus perform this journey, see his father, assist at the sacrifice, be a witness of his agonies, and return back to Trachis, during the representation of little more than one act ? The unity of time is here apparently broken. The poet, as Brumoy imagines, presumed on the distance of Athens, from the scene of action, and probably met with indulgence from his spectators, though it was not agreeable to his usual accuracy in these particulars.

Behold Alcides first : as he prepar'd
 The frequent victim, from the palace came
 Lichas thy messenger, and with him brought
 The fatal gift : wrap'd in the deadly garment
 (For such was thy command) twelve oxen then
 Without a blemish, firstlings of the spoil,
 He slew ; together next a hundred fell,
 The mingled flock : pleas'd with his gaudy vest
 And happy in it he awhile remain'd,
 Off'ring with joy his grateful sacrifice ;
 But lo ! when from the holy victim rose
 The bloody flame, and from the pitchy wood
 Exhal'd it's moisture, sudden a cold sweat
 Bedew'd his limbs, and to his body stuck
 As by the hand of some artificer
 Clos'd join'd to ev'ry part, the fatal vest ;
 Convulsion rack'd his bones, and through his veins,
 Like the fell serpent's deadly venom, rag'd ;
 Then question'd he the wretched guiltless Lichas
 By what detested arts he had procur'd
 The poison'd garb ; he, ignorant of all,
 Cou'd only say, it was the gift he brought
 From Deianira ; when Alcides heard it,
 Tortur'd with pain, he took him by the foot,
 And hurl'd him headlong on a pointed rock
 That o'er the ocean hung ; his brains dash'd forth
 With mingled blood flow'd thro' his clotted hair
 In horrid streams ; the multitude with shrieks
 Lamented loud the fury of Alcides,
 And Lichas' hapless fate ; none durst oppose
 His raging phrenzy ; prostrate on the earth
 Now wou'd he lay and groan ; and now uprising
 Wou'd bellow forth his griefs ; the mountain-tops

Of Locris, and Eubœa's rocks return'd
 His dreadful cries; then on the ground out-stretch'd
 In bitt'rest wrath he curs'd the nuptial bed
 Of OENEUS, and his execrations pour'd
 On thee his worst of foes: at length his eyes,
 Distorted forth from the surrounding smoak,
 He cast on me, who midst attending crouds
 Wept his sad fate; 'approach, he cry'd, my son,
 ' Do not forsake thy father, rather come
 ' And share his fate than leave me here; O! haste,
 ' And take me hence; bear me where never eye
 ' Of mortal shall behold me; O! my child,
 ' Let me not perish here: ' thus spake my father,
 And I obey'd: distracted with his pains
 A vessel brings him to this place, and soon
 Living or dead you will behold him here.
 This have thy horrid machinations done
 For thy Alcides: O! may justice doom thee
 To righteous punishment, if it be lawful
 For me to call down vengeance on a mother,
 As sure it is, on one who hath disclaim'd
 All piety like thee; the earth sustains not
 A better man than him whom thou hast murder'd,
 Nor shalt thou e'er behold his like again.

[Exit Deianira.

CHORUS.

Whence this abrupt departure? know'st thou not
 To go in silence thus confirms thy guilt?

VOL. II.

I

H Y L-

Nor shalt thou, &c. ' ΟΠΟΙΟΝ ΑΛΛΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΟΨΕΙ ΠΟΤΕ' says the
 original. Shakespear makes his Hamlet speak the same language.

Take him for all in all,

I shall not look upon his like again.

Hamlet.

To go in silence, &c. This silence exactly resembles that of Eury-

dice

HYLLUS.

Let her be gone: and may some prosp'rous gale
 Waft her far off, that these abhorring eyes
 May never see her more! what boots the name
 Of mother, when no longer she performs
 A mother's duty? let her go in peace,
 And, for her kindness to my father, soon
 May she enjoy the blessing she bestow'd!

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

True was the oracle divine,
 Long since deliver'd from Dodona's shrine,
 Which said, Alcides' woes shou'd last
 Till twelve revolving years were past;
 Then shou'd his labours end in sweet repose:
 Behold, my friends, 'tis come to pass,
 'Tis all fulfill'd; for who, alas!
 In peaceful death, or toil or slav'ry knows?

ANTISTROPHE I.

If deep within his tortur'd veins
 The centaur's cruel poison reigns,

That

dice in the *Antigone* before taken notice of, and, as Brumby observes, is infinitely preferable to Ovid's frequent repetition of

Impia quid cessas, Deianira, mori?

'On ne s'exhorte point (says the French critic) à mourir, quand le dessein en est bien pris. Beaucoup moins le fait on avec tant d'art; le silence est plus eloquent, & plus vif.'

True was the oracle, &c. This is the fifth intermede or song of the chorus, and, if we divide the play into acts, must conclude the fourth, as it is the only part where the stage can be supposed vacant: it turns, we see, on the double sense of the oracle, which was now accomplished in the death of Hercules. This oracle is mentioned by Deianira in the first scene of the tragedy, and by Hercules himself also in the last.

That from the Hydra's baleful breath
Destructive flow'd, replète with death,
On him another sun shall never rise;
The venom runs thro' ev'ry part,
And, lo! to Nessus' direful art
Alcides falls a helpless sacrifice.

STROPHE II.

Poor Deianira long deplor'd
Her waining charms, and ever faithless lord;
At length by evil counsel sway'd
Her passion's dictates she obey'd,
Resolv'd Alcides' doubtful truth to prove;
But now, alas! laments his fate
In ceaseless woe, and finds too late
A dying husband, and a foreign love.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Another death must soon succeed,
Another victim soon shall bleed,
Fatal, Alcides, was the dart
That pierc'd the rival monarch's heart,
And brought Iole from her native land;
From Venus did our sorrows flow,
The secret spring of all our woe,
For nought was done but by her dread command.

[Exeunt.

I 2

ACT

Another death, &c. The chorus foretells the death of Deianira, who had already declared that if she did not succeed in the attempt to regain her husband's affection, she would not long survive him; this prepares the audience for the scene that follows.

A C T V.

S C E N E I.

[A noise within the palace.

C H O R U S.

O R I'm deceiv'd, or I did hear loud shrieks
 Within the palace; 'twas the voice of one
 In anguish; doubtless some calamity
 Hath fall'n upon us now; what can it be?
 But see, yon matron, with contracted brow
 And unaccustom'd sadness, comes to tell
 The dreadful news.

S C E N E II.

N U R S E, C H O R U S.

N U R S E.

What woes, my hapless daughters,
 Alcides' fatal gift hath brought upon us!

C H O R U S.

What dost thou tell us?

N U R S E.

Deianira treads
 The last sad path of mortals.

C H O R U S.

Is she gone?

N U R S E.

'Tis so indeed.

C H O R U S.

What! dead!

N U R S E.

NURSE.

Again I say
She is no more.

CHORUS.

Alas! how did she perish?

NURSE.

Most fearfully: 'twas dreadful to behold.

CHORUS.

How fell she then?

NURSE.

By her own hand.

CHORUS.

But wherefore?

What madness, what disorder? what cou'd move her

To perpetrate so terrible a deed?

Thus adding death to death.

NURSE.

The fatal steel

Destroy'd her.

CHORUS.

Did'st thou see it?

NURSE.

I was by,

Close by her side.

CHORUS.

How was it?

NURSE.

Her own arm

Struck the sad blow.

CHORUS.

Indeed!

NURSE.

Most veritably.

CHORUS.

In evil hour this rival virgin came
To bring destruction here.

NURSE.

And so she did;
Had'st thou like me been witness to the deed,
Thou woud'st much more have pity'd her.

CHORUS.

Alas!

How cou'd a woman do it?

NURSE.

'Twas most dreadful,
As thou shalt hear, for I will tell thee all:
Soon as she enter'd at the palace gate
And saw her son prepare the funeral bed,
To th' inmost chamber silent she retir'd
From ev'ry eye, there, at the altars feet
Falling, lamented loud her widow'd state;
And ever as she lit on aught her hands
Had us'd in happier days, the tears wou'd flow;
From room to room she wander'd, and if chance
A lov'd domestic cross'd her she wou'd weep
And mourn her fate, for ever now depriv'd
Of converse sweet, and hymenæal joys;
Then wou'd she strew her garments on the bed

Of

And ever as she lit, &c. Such little incidents as these, arising with propriety from situation and circumstance, contribute as much as any thing to point out the superiority of a good writer: in Sophocles we always meet with the language of nature, and a compleat knowledge of the human heart, without any of those forced conceits and refinements so frequent in modern writers: nothing can exceed the simplicity and elegance of this description: Virgil felt all its merit, and has copied it closely. See *Æn.* b. 4.

Of her Alcides, (for conceal'd I watch'd
Her ev'ry motion) throw herself upon it,
And as the tears in a warm flood burst forth;
' Farewel ! (she cry'd) for ever farewell now
' My nuptial couch ! for never shalt thou more
' Receive this wretched burthen ;' thus she spake,
And with quick hand the golden button loos'd,
Then cast her robe aside, her bosom bared
And seem'd prepar'd to strike ; I ran and told
The dreadful purpose to her son, too late
We came, and saw her wounded to the heart ;
The pious son beheld his bleeding mother
And wept ; for well he knew, by anger fir'd,
And the fell centaur's cruel fraud betray'd,
Unweeting she had done the dreadful deed :
Close to her side he laid him down, and join'd
His lips to hers, lamenting sore that thus
He had accus'd her guiltless ; then deplor'd
His own sad fate, thus suddenly bereav'd
Of both his parents : you have heard my tale.
Who to himself shall promise length of life ?
None but the fool : for, O ! to-day alone
Is ours ; we are not certain of to-morrow.

CHORUS,

Which shall I weep ? which most our hearts shou'd fill
With grief, the present, or the future ill ?
The dying, or the dead ? 'tis equal woe
To feel the stroke, or fear th' impending blow.

STROPHE.

O ! for a breeze to waft us o'er
Propitious to some distant shore !

14

To

O ! for a breeze, &c. This is the sixth and last intermede, or
song

To shield our souls from fore affright,
 And save us from the dreadful sight:
 That fight the hardest heart wou'd move
 In his last pangs the son of Jove;
 To see the poison, run through ev'ry vein,
 And limbs convuls'd with agonizing pain.

A N T I S T R O P H E.

Behold th' attendant train is nigh,
 I hear the voice of misery;
 Ev'n as the plaintive nightingale,
 That warbles sweet her mournful tale:
 Silent and slow they lead him on;
 Hark! I hear Alcides groan!
 Again 'tis silence all! this way they tread;
 Or sleeps he now, or rests he with the dead?

S C E N E

song of the chorus, who, alarmed at the approaching fate of Hercules, and shocked at the death of Deianira, lament their own distressful situation, as obliged to be witnesses of so melancholy a scene: it is remarkable, that throughout this play, the chorus's are every one of them closely attached to the subject, and arise naturally from the various circumstances of it.

Some distant shore. The learned reader, who consults this passage in the original, will find that the scholiasts have entirely mistaken the meaning of it; and, according to custom, misled the translators, one of whom renders it thus, ' Utinam aliquis aspiet secundus nostram ad domum ventus !' ' Would to heaven a favourable wind would blow us home!' though it is apparent that as the chorus consists of virgins of Trachis, they were at home already, and only wished to be removed for a time, to avoid a sight so disagreeable as the death of Hercules. Rattallerus, who, as I observed, is the only translator that seems to have understood Sophocles, perceived this absurdity, and has given us the true sense.

SCENE III.

HERCULES, HYLLUS, NURSE,
CHORUS, ATTENDANTS.

HYLLUS.

Alas! my father; whither shall I go,
Wretch that I am! O! where shall I betake me?
What will become of thy afflicted son?

ATTENDANT.

Speak softly, youth, do not awake his pains;
Refrain thy grief, for yet Alcides lives,
Tho' verging to the tomb; be calm.

HYLLUS.

What say'st thou?

Doth he yet live?

ATTENDANT.

He doth; disturb not thus

His slumbers, nor provoke the dire disease.

HYLLUS.

Alas! I cannot bear to see him thus. [Hercules awakes.

HERCULES.

O! Jove! where am I, and with whom? what land
Contains the wretched Hercules, oppress'd
With never-ending woes? ah, me! again
The deadly poison racks me.

A T-

O! Jove, where am I. Hercules, we must suppose, is here brought on the stage on a couch or litter, 'affertur (says Camera-rius) inter cruciatus sopitus in lectulo; his pains intermitting for a short time, he is dropped into a slumber; in this condition he is met by Hyllus, who imagines him to be dead; the chorus perceive he is only asleep; he awakes in agony; the scene strongly resembles one in the Hyppolytus of Euripides.

ATTENDANT. [to Hyllus.

See'st thou not

'Twere better far to have remain'd in silence,
And not awak'd him.

HYLLUS.

'Twas impossible

Unmov'd to look on such calamity;
I cou'd not do it.

HERCULES.

TO! Centean rocks,

Where smok the sacred altars, is it thus
O! Jove, thou dost reward my piety?
What dreadful punishment is this thy hand
Hath laid on me, who never cou'd deserve
Such bitter wrath? / what incantations now,
What pow'r of med'cine can assuage my pain,
Unless great Jove assisted? health to me
Without him, were a miracle indeed.
Let me, O! let me rest, refuse me not
A little slumber; why will ye torment me?
Why bend me forward? O! 'tis worse than death;
Had you not waked me, I had been at peace:
Again it rages with redoubled force,
Where are you now, ye thankless Græcians, where,
Whom I have toil'd to serve on the rough main,
And through the pathless wood? where are ye now
To help a dying wretch? will no kind hand
Stretch forth the friendly sword, or in the flame
Consume me? none, alas! will cut me off
From hated life.

ATTENDANT.

O! youth! assist thy father;

It

It is beyond my strength; thy quicker fight
May be more useful.

HYLLUS.

My poor aid is ready;
But wheresoe'er I am, 'tis not in me
T' expel the subtle poison that destroys him;
Such is the will of Jove.

HERCULES.

My son, my son,
Where art thou? bear me up, assist me; O!
Again it comes, th' unconquerable ill,
The dire disease; O! Pallas, aid me now,
Draw forth thy sword, my son; strike, strike thy father,
And heal the wound thy impious mother made;
O! cou'd I see her like myself destroy'd,
I shou'd be happy! brother of great Jove,
Sweet Pluto, hear me! O! with speedy death
Lay me to rest, and bury all my woes.

CHORUS.

The anguish of th' unhappy man, my friends,
Is terrible; I tremble but to hear him.

HERCULES.

What hath this body suffer'd! O! the toils,
The labours I endur'd, the pangs I felt,
Unutterable woes! but never aught
So dreadful as this fore calamity
Oppress'd Alcides; not the wife of Jove,
Nor vile Eurystheus cou'd torment me thus,

As

O! the toils, &c. This pathetic lamentation of Hercules hath met with universal applause from the admirers and critics of antiquity. The great Roman orator has left us a translation of it, which remains almost the only specimen of his poetical abilities. See Tully's Tusculan questions, b. 2.

As, OENEUS, thy deceitful daughter hath ;
Oh ! I am tangled in a cruel net,
Wov'n by the furies ; it devours my flesh,
Dries up my veins, and drinks the vital blood ;
My body's wither'd, and I cannot break
Th' indissoluble chain : nor hostile spear,
Nor earth-born giants, nor the savage herd,
The wild Barbarian, or the Græcian host,
Not all the nations I have journey'd o'er
Cou'd do a deed like this : at last I fall
Like a poor coward, by a woman's hand,
Unarm'd, and unassisted ; O ! my son,
Now prove thyself the offspring of Alcides ;
Nor let thy rev'rence of a mother's name
Surpass thy duty to an injur'd father ;
Go, bring her hither, give her to my wrath,
That I may see whom thou wilt most lament,
When thou behold'st my vengeance fall on her ;
Fear not, my son, but go ; have pity on me,
Pity thy father ; all must pity me,
Whilst they behold, ev'n as the tender maid,
Alcides weep, who never wept before.
I bore my sorrows all without a groan,
But now thou see'st I am a very woman,
Come near, my child ; O ! think what I endure,
For I will shew thee ; look on this poor body,
Let all behold it : what a sight is here !
Oh ! me ! again the cruel poison tears
My entrails, nor affords a moment's ease.
O ! take me, Pluto, to thy gloomy reign ;
Father of lightning, mighty Jove, send down
Thy bolt, and strike me now ! again it racks,
It tortures me ! O ! hands, that once had strength,

And

And you, my sinewy arms, was it by you
 The terrible Nemæan lion fell,
 The dreadful hydra, and the lawless race
 Of centaurs? did this wither'd hand subdue
 The Erymanthian boar, wide-wasting plague!
 And from the shades of Orcus drag to light
 The triple-headed monster? by this arm
 Did the fierce guardian of the golden fruit
 In Libya's deserts fall? unnumber'd toils
 Have I endur'd of old, and never yet
 Did mortal bear a trophy from Alcides:
 But nerveless now this arm; see, from the bone
 Darts the loose flesh; I waste beneath the pow'r
 Of this dark pestilence: O! Hercules,
 Why boast thy mother sprung of noblest race,
 And vainly call thyself the son of Jove?
 But, mark me well; this creeping shadow still,
 Poor as it is, shall yet revenge itself
 On her who did the execrable deed;
 Wou'd she were here to feel my wrath, to know
 And teach mankind, that Hercules tho' dead,
 As whilst he liv'd, can scourge the guilty still!

C H O R U S.

Unhappy Greece! how wilt thou mourn the loss
 Of such a man!

H Y L L U S.

Permit me but to speak,
 Distemper'd as thou art, my father, hear me;
 Nought shall I ask unfit for thee to grant;

Be

Nemæan lion. Nemæa was a wood near Argia in Pelopponesus, where Hercules slew a lion of prodigious size and fierceness.

The Erymanthian boar. Erymanthus was a mountain of Arcadia, where Hercules slew a wild boar that infested the country.

Be calm and listen to me ; yet thou know'st not
How groundless thy complaints, and what new joy
Awaits thee still.

HERCULES.

Be brief then, and inform me ;
My pains afflict me so I cannot guess
Thy subtle purpose.

HYLLUS.

'Twas to speak of her,
My mother ; 'twas to tell thee of her state
And how unweeting she offended thee.

HERCULES.

Thou worst of children ! woud'st thou then defend
The murth'rer of thy father ? dar'st thou thus
Recall the sad remembrance of her crime ?

HYLLUS.

It must not be conceal'd ; I know too well
I can no longer hide it.

HERCULES.

What ? her guilt ?

'Tis known already.

HYLLUS.

Thou'lt not always think so.

HERCULES.

Speak then, but take good heed thou shew thyself
Worthy thy father.

HYLLUS.

Know then,----she is dead.

HERCULES.

O! dreadful ! murder'd ? by what hand ?

HYLLUS.

Her own.

HER-

HERCULES. *The wife, the wife!*
Wou'd she had fall'n by mine!

HYLLUS. *I now believe my father's words.*
Alas! my father,

Did'st thou know all, thy anger wou'd be chang'd
To pity for her.

HERCULES. *Alas! my father!*
That were strange indeed;

Why dost thou think so?

HYLLUS. *She did mean thee well,*
But err'd unknowing.

HERCULES. *How can I know?*
Mean't she well to slay

Thy father?

HYLLUS. *Of living wife, but from some husband.*
Thy new marriage was the cause:

She had prepar'd a philtre for thy love,
And knew not 'twas a poison.

HERCULES. *How can I know?*
But, say, who

So skill'd in magic arts at Trachis here
Cou'd give her this?

HYLLUS. *Thy father's words.*
The savage centaur Nessus,

Who did persuade her 'twou'd restore thy love
Giv'n to another wife.

HERCULES. *How can I know?*
Undone Alcides!

I die, my child; there is no life for me;
Alas! I see it now; I see my woes;

Hyllus, away, thy father is no more;
Begone, and call thy brothers, call Alcmena,

The

The wife, alas ! in vain, the wife of Jove ;
Go, bring them here, that with my latest breath
I may declare my fate long since foretold
By oracles divine.

HYLLUS.

Alcmena's gone

To Tyrrinth ; with her many of thy sons
Remain ; some dwell at Thebes, the rest are here,
And wait with me to hear, and to obey thee.

HERCULES.

Then listen to me, for the time is come
When thou must prove thyself indeed my son ;
Know, Jove, my heav'nly sire, long since foretold
I was not born to perish by the hand
Of living man, but from some habitant
Of Pluto's dark abode shou'd meet my fate ;
The centaur Nessus (so was it fulfill'd)
Though dead destroy'd me : but I'll tell thee more,
New oracles confirm'd the old, for know
When to the Selli's sacred grove I came,

(The

To Tyrrinth. Tyrrinth or Tyrrinthia was a city in the neighbourhood of Argos.

Of living man. The original is *πνευτος μνηστος*, which literally translated answers exactly to our common expression, 'no man breathing ; but this is too low and familiar for tragedy : it is observable, that there is a strong resemblance between the oracles of antiquity, and the witches of modern times : we cannot read the passage before us, without recollecting a parallel one in Shakespear, where he makes his witches foretel.

'That none of woman born should slay Macbeth ;'
which is accomplished by it's proving afterwards that Duncan

'Was from his mother's womb untimely rip'd,'
in the same manner as Hercules fell by the artifice of Nessus, long after his death.

(The wand'ring priests who o'er the mountains roam,
And rest their weary'd limbs on the cold ground)
An antient oak prophetic did declare
That if I liv'd to this decisive hour,
Here all my labours, all my toils shou'd end :
I thought it told me I shou'd live in peace ;
Alas ! it only meant that I must dye,
For death will put an end to ev'ry care.
Since thus it is, my son, thou too must join
To ease Alcides ; let me not reproach thee,
But yield thy willing aid, nor e'er forget
The best of laws, obedience to a father.

H Y L L U S.

Thy words affright me ; but declare thy purpose ;
Behold me ready to perform thy orders :
Whate'er they be.

H E R C U L E S.

First give me then thy hand.

H Y L L U S.

But why this pledge, and wherefore anxious thus
Dost thou require it ?

H E R C U L E S.

Wilt thou give it me,

Or dost refuse ?

H Y L L U S.

There, take it ; I obey.

H E R C U L E S.

First swear then by the head of Jove my fire.

H Y L L U S.

I will ; but what ?

H E R C U L E S.

Swear that thou wilt perform

All I enjoin thee.

HYLLUS. (Sings, going down off T.)

(Singing) Bear me witness, Jove!

I swear.

HERCULES.

And imprecate the wrath divine

If thou perform'st it not.

HYLLUS.

I shall not fail;

But, if I do, may vengeance swift o'er take me!

HERCULES.

Thou know'st the top of Oeta's sacred hill.

HYLLUS.

I know it well, and many a sacrifice

Have offer'd there.

HERCULES.

That is the destin'd place,

Where thou, assisted by thy chosen friends,

My son, must bear the body of Alcides;

There shalt thou cut thee many a leafy branch

From the wild olive and deep-rooted oak,

Then cast me on it, take thy torch, and light

My fun'ral pile; without one tear or groan

Unmanly do it, if thou art my son;

For if thou fail'st, remember, after death

A father's curses will sit heavy on thee.

HYLLUS.

Alas! my father, what hast thou commanded?

What hast thou bade me do?

HERCULES.

What must be done,

Or thou art not the son of Hercules.

HYLLUS.

A dreadful deed! and must I then become

A par-

A parricide, and murder thee?

HERCULES.

O! no!

My kind physician, balm of all my woes.

HYLLUS.

Myself to cast thee in the flames! is that

An office fit for me?

HERCULES.

If that alone

Seem dreadful to thee, yet perform the rest.

HYLLUS.

I'll bear thee thither.

HERCULES.

Wilt thou raise the pile?

HYLLUS.

I will do any thing but be myself

Thy executioner.

HERCULES.

'Tis well, my son:

But one thing more, and I am satisfy'd;

'Tis but a little.

HYLLUS.

Be it e'er so great,

I shall obey.

HERCULES.

Thou know'st the virgin daughter

Of Eurytus.

HYLLUS.

Iole?

HERCULES.

Her, my son;

Remember, 'tis a father's last command,

And thou hast sworn obedience; that Iole

I do bequeath thee; take her to thy arms
 When I am dead, and let her be thy wife:
 It is not fitting she who lay by th' side
 Of Hercules to any but the son
 Of Hercules shou'd e'er descend; to thee
 Alone I yield her: speak not, but obey me;
 After thy kind compliance to refuse
 So slight a favour were to cancel all.

H Y L L U S.

[aside.]

Alas! distemper'd as he is, to chide him
 Were most unkind; and yet, what madness this!

H E R C U L E S.

Thou wilt not do it then?

H Y L L U S.

What! marry her,
 Who slew my mother! her, who hath brought thee
 To this sad state! it were an act of phrenzy:

Death

Take her to thy arms. It must be acknowledged, that the request of Hercules is of a very extraordinary nature: the son is desired, or rather commanded to marry his father's mistress, and this, not to shield her from the resentment of the injured mother now dead, but only, as it should seem, that so valuable a treasure should not go out of the family. Hyllus remonstrates against it, but in vain, and at last gives his father a promise of consent, which we do not however remember to have read that he ever performed. Racine is supposed by Brumoy to have copied this incident in his *Mithridate*, though with some difference in the circumstance, his son being represented as an admirer of his father's mistress, and therefore well prepared to receive the legacy.

Who lay by th' side of Hercules. This is a literal translation of the original 'εμοις πλευροισ κλιθεισα', and answers exactly to our own idiom,

"She might lay by th' side of an emperor, and command him
 "talks."

Shakespear's Othello.

Death be my portion, rather than to live
With those I hate.

[turning to the chorus.]

HERCULES.

He will not pay me then
The duty which he owes a dying father :
But if thou dost not, curses from the gods
Await thee.

HYLLUS.

O! thou rav'st; it is the rage
Of thy distemper makes thee talk so wildly.

HERCULES.

Thou hast awaken'd all my woes; again
They torture now.

HYLLUS.

Alas! what doubts arise,
What fears perplex me!

HERCULES.

Mean'st thou to dispute
A father's will?

HYLLUS.

Must I then learn of thee
To do a wicked deed?

HERCULES.

It is not wicked,
If I request it of thee.

HYLLUS.

Is it just?

HERCULES.

It is; the gods are witnesses 'tis just.

HYLLUS.

Then by those gods I swear, I will perform

What thou command'st: I never can be deem'd
Or base, or impious, for obeying thee.

HERCULES.

'Tis well, my son; one added kindness more,
And I am satisfy'd: before the racks
Of dire convulsion, and the pangs of madness
Again attack me, throw me on the pile.
Haste then, and bear me to it, there at last
I shall have peace, and rest from all my sorrows.

HYLLUS.

Since 'tis thy will, my father, we submit.

HERCULES.

Now, e'er the dreadful malady return,
Be firm, my soul, ev'n as the harden'd steel;
Suspend thy cries, and meet the fatal blow
With joy and pleasure; bear me hence, my friends,
For you have shewn yourselves my friends indeed,
And prov'd the base ingratitude of those
From whom I sprang, the cruel gods, who saw
Unmov'd the woes of their unhappy son.
'Tis not in mortal to foresee his fate;
Mine is to them disgraceful, and to me
Most terrible, to me of all mankind
The most distress'd, the poor, the lost Alcides.

CHORUS.

Iole, come not forth, unhappy virgin,

Already

Iole, &c. Iole, we must suppose, is coming on the stage, anxious to know the fate of Hercules, but is stopped by the chorus, and prevented from being a witness of the melancholy scene. Hercules is led out by Hyllus, who had promised to accompany him to mount OEta, where he expired.

* * * This

Already hast thou seen enough of woe,
And yet fresh sorrows wait thee; but remember,
All is decreed, and all the work of Jove.

K 4

* * This tragedy gave rise to the *Hercules Furens* of Seneca, and the *Hercule Mourant* of Rotrou; they who will take the trouble to peruse these imperfect copies of Sophocles, will easily perceive how much the Latin and French poets have deviated from the simplicity and beauty of the original.

Dramatis Personae.

OE D I P U S, King of Thebes.

JOCASTA, wife of OE D I P U S.

CREON, brother to JOCASTA.

A Shepherd from Corinth.

OE D I P U S
An Old Shepherd, formerly belonging to Thebes.
T Y R A N N U S.
His first of his kind.

CHORUS

Theban Young Men, Children of OE D I P U S, Attendants.

SCENE I. Thebes, before the palace of OE D I P U S.

Dramatis Personæ.

OEDIPUS, king of Thebes.

JOCASTA, wife of OEdipus.

CREON, brother to Jocasta.

TIRESIAS, a blind prophet of Thebes.

A SHEPHERD from Corinth.

A MESSENGER.

AN OLD SHEPHERD, formerly belonging to Laius.

HIGH PRIEST of Jupiter.

CHORUS,

Composed of the **PRIESTS** and **ANTIENT MEN** of Thebes,
THEBAN YOUTHS, **CHILDREN** of OEdipus, **ATTENDANTS**, &c.

SCENE Thebes, before the palace of OEdipus.

OE D I P U S
T Y R A N N U S.

A C T I.

S C E N E I.

OEDIPUS, HIGH PRIEST of Jupiter.

OEDIPUS.

O! My lov'd sons, the youthful progeny
Of antient Cadmus, wherefore sit you here

And

It is scarce possible to conceive any thing more solemn and magnificent than the opening of this tragedy; in the front of the scene is the palace of OEdipus; before it, an altar erected to him; at the foot of which, we see a number of young men of the first quality in Thebes, with boughs of supplication in their hands, and prostrate on the earth; with them the high-priest of Jupiter, and a little behind, several other priests and old men, as preparing for a sacrifice; beyond them we have a distant view of the two temples of Minerva, with their altars, and a large concourse of people standing round them, seeming, by various acts of worship, to deprecate the general calamity; the scenery and decorations, necessary on this occasion, account in some measure for the otherwise incredible expence which the Athenians are said to have been at, in the representation of this piece.

O! my loved sons, &c. OEdipus, alarmed at the groans and lamentations of his people thronging to the altar, comes out of his palace to enquire into the cause of their distress; this humanity and tenderness

And suppliant thus, with sacred boughs adorn'd,
 Croud to our altars? frequent sacrifice,
 And pray'rs and sighs and sorrows fill the land.
 I cou'd have sent to learn the fatal cause;
 But see, your anxious sov'reign comes himself
 To know it all from you; behold your king,
 Renowned OEdipus; do thou, old man,
 For best that office suits thy years, inform me,
 Why you are come; is it the present ill
 That calls you here, or dread of future woe?
 Hard were indeed the heart that did not feel

For

tenderneſs recommend his character to the audience, and naturally excite that pity and compaſſion which the poet intends to raiſe for his ſucceeding misfortunes; he calls his ſubjects the progeny of Cadmus, who was the founder of Thebes, about two hundred years before his time.

With ſacred boughs adorned. When prayers and ſupplications were to be made, either in the temples or other places, the petitioners carried boughs in their hands, bound round with fillets of white wool; this was always looked on as a mark of diſtreſs, which entitled them to a peculiar regard, render'd their perſons ſacred, and proteſted them from all violence; it is not improbable, but that this cuſtom among the Greeks was borrowed from the Jews, whom we find carrying boughs on ſolemn feſtivals.

See Macchab. chap. xiii.

Renowned OEdipus. Dacier obſerves in this place, that OEdipus's mention of himſelf answers the double purpoſe, of making his perſon known to the ſpectators on his firſt entrance, and at the ſame time conveying to them an idea of his character as proud and ſelf-ſufficient; the latter of theſe reaſons, aſcribed by Dacier, may perhaps appear unneceſſary to thoſe who are acquainted with the manners and genius of antiquity; the heroes of Homer and Virgil, we may remember, make no ſcruple of boating their own abilities and perfections; Sophocles therefore wants no excuſe for talking the ſame language.

For grief like yours, and pity such distress :
 If there be aught that OEdipus can do
 To serve his people, know me for your friend.

P R I E S T.

O ! king, thou see'st what numbers throng thy altars ;
 Here, bending sad beneath the weight of years,
 The hoary priests, here croud the chosen youth
 Of Thebes, with these a weak and suppliant train
 Of helpless infants, last in me behold
 The minister of Jove : far off thou see'st
 Assembled multitudes, with laurel crown'd,
 To where Minerva's hallow'd temples rise
 Frequent repair, or where Ismenus laves
 Apollo's sacred shrine : too well thou know'st,
 Thy wretched Thebes, with dreadful storms oppress'd,
 Scarce lifts her head above the whelming flood ;
 The teeming earth her blasted harvest mourns,
 And on the barren plain the flocks and herds
 Unnumber'd perish ; dire abortion thwarts
 The mother's hopes, and painful she brings forth
 The half-form'd infant ; baleful pestilence
 Hath laid our city waste, the fiery god
 Stalks o'er deserted Thebes ; whilst with our groans
 Enrich'd, the gloomy god of Erebus
 Triumphant smiles : O ! OEdipus, to thee
 We bend ; behold these youths, with me they kneel,

And

Thy wretched Thebes, &c. This short but pathetic description of the plague at Thebes cannot be sufficiently admired : the poetical image of the fiery god stalking over the city, and Pluto's growing rich with the groans of the dying men, must strike every feeling heart ; perhaps the beauty and simplicity of this passage will best appear by comparing it with the tinsel refinements of Seneca, and the wild rants of our own madman Lee, on the same subject.

And suppliant at thy altars sue for aid,
 To thee the first of men, and only less
 Than them whose favour thou alone can'st gain,
 The gods above; thy wisdom yet may heal
 The deep-felt wounds, and make the pow'rs divine
 Propitious to us: Thebes long since to thee
 Her safety ow'd, when from the Sphynx deliver'd
 Thy grateful people saw thee, not by man
 But by the gods instructed, save the land;
 Now then, thou best of kings, assist us now,
 O! by some mortal or immortal aid
 Now succour the distress'd! on wisdom oft
 And prudent counsels, in the hour of ill,
 Success awaits; O! dearest prince, support,
 Relieve thy Thebes, on thee its saviour once
 Again it calls; now, if thou woud'st not see

The

From the Sphynx delivered. The story of the Sphynx, from the variety of accounts handed down to us concerning it, is almost as much a riddle to us as it was to OEdipus: the Sphynx, according to poetical history, was a monster with the face of a woman, wings of a bird, body of a dog, and claws like a lion; she dwelt near Thebes, and every day destroyed many people; the oracle declared that she could never be conquered, till some one was found that could expound a certain riddle, or ænigma, which she proposed. After many unsuccessful attempts OEdipus came, and explained it; the Sphynx was destroyed; the nation delivered, and OEdipus rewarded for it with the kingdom of Thebes; some authors interpret the Sphynx into a maritime force, invading Boeotia under the command of a woman, whom OEdipus slew; others pretend that the Sphynx was a natural daughter of Laius, who slew all those Thebans, who dared to mention an oracle of Apollo, said to have been given to Cadmus, concerning the succession to the throne, and declaring bastards incapable of inheriting it; the fable says, that she defied them to produce this oracle; but that it was revealed to OEdipus in a dream, who repeated it publicly, and destroyed his sister.

The mem'ry perish of thy former deeds,
 Let it not call in vain, but rise, and save!
 With happiest omens once and fair success
 We saw thee crown'd; O! be thyself again,
 And may thy will and fortune be the same!
 If thou art yet to reign, O! king, remember
 A sovereign's riches is a peopled realm;
 For what will ships or lofty tow'rs avail
 Unarm'd with men to guard and to defend them?

OE D I P U S.

O! my unhappy sons, too well I know
 Your sad estate; I know the woes of Thebes;
 And yet amongst you lives not such a wretch
 As OEdipus; for O! on me, my children,
 Your sorrows press; alas! I feel for you
 My people, for myself, for Thebes, for all;
 Think not, I slept regardless of your ills;
 O! no, with many a tear I wept your fate
 And oft in meditation deep revolv'd
 How best your peace and safety to restore:
 The only med'cine that my thoughts cou'd find
 I have administer'd, Menæceus' son,
 The noble Creon, went by my command
 To Delphos, from Apollo's shrine to know
 What must be done to save this wretched land;
 'Tis time he were return'd; I wonder much
 At his delay; if, when he comes, your king
 Perform not all the God enjoins, then say
 He is the worst of men.

P R I E S T.

O! king, thy words
 Are gracious, and if right these youths inform me,
 Creon is here.

OE D I.

OEDIPUS.

O! Phœbus, grant he come
With tidings chearful as the smile he wears!

PRIEST.

He is the messenger of good; for see,
His brows are crown'd with laurel.

OEDIPUS.

We shall soon

Be satisfy'd: he comes.

OEDIPUS

SCENE II.

CREON, OEDIPUS, PRIEST, CHORUS.

OEDIPUS.

My dearest Creon,

O! say, what answer bear'st thou from the god,
Or good, or ill?

CREON.

Good, very good; for know,

The worst of ills, if rightly used, may prove
The means of happiness.

OEDIPUS.

What says my friend?

This answer gives me nought to hope or fear.

CREON.

His brows are crowned with laurel. It was usual for those who, on consulting the oracle of Delphos, had received a favourable answer, to put on a crown of laurel at their return, in token of their success: Creon had reason to look upon his in that light, as it pointed out an immediate remedy for the evil: the sight of the laurel therefore raises the hopes of Oedipus, and consequently heightens his disappointment afterwards. Sophocles, throughout this excellent piece, appears like a fine painter, whose judicious mixture and disposition of light and shade animates and enlivens the picture.

CREON.

Shall we retire, or wou'd you that I speak
In public here?

OEDIPUS.

Before them all declare it;
Their woes sit heavier on me than my own.

CREON.

Then mark what I have heard: the God commands
That instant we drive forth the fatal cause
Of this dire pestilence, nor nourish here
Th' accursed monster.

OEDIPUS.

Who? what monster? how
Remove it?

CREON.

Or by banishment, or death;
Life must be giv'n for life; for yet his blood
Rests on the city.

OEDIPUS.

Whose? what means the god?

CREON.

O! king, before thee Laius rul'd o'er Thebes.

OEDIPUS.

I know he did, though I did ne'er behold him.

CREON.

Laius was slain, and on his murderers,
So Phœbus says, we must have vengeance.

OEDIPUS.

Where,
Where are the murth'ers? who shall trace the guilt
Bury'd so long in silence?

CREON.

Here, he said,

Ev'n in this land : what's sought for may be found,
But truth unsearch'd for, seldom comes to light.

O E D I P U S.

How did he fall, and where? at home, abroad,

Dy'd

How did he fall? This, Dacier thinks, is the only objection that can be made to the fable of OEdipus, and which is, in his opinion, insuperable: Aristotle had previously affirmed it to be absolutely necessary, that among all the incidents which compose the fable, no one should be without reason; or, if that be impossible, it ought to be so managed, that what is without reason should be always out of the tragedy; as Sophocles has prudently observed in his OEdipus. It was without reason (says Dacier in his comment on this passage of Aristotle) that OEdipus should be so long married to Jocasta, and not know in what manner Laius was killed, or make enquiry after the murderers; but as the subject could not subsist without this circumstance, Sophocles has judiciously placed it out of the action: the poet is answerable only for those incidents, which make a part in his subject, and not for those which precede or follow it. Brumoy is of the same opinion with Dacier, and says it is 'un défaut visible, quoique nécessaire,' 'a visible though a necessary fault,' that Aristotle therefore has endeavoured to excuse Sophocles as well as he could.

If I had leisure and inclination to turn commentator on this passage before us, I cannot but think it were an easy task, in opposition to the arbitrary decision both of Greek and French critics, to defend Sophocles, and to prove that there is no such glaring absurdity in the supposition of OEdipus's real or pretended ignorance on this occasion: was it the business of OEdipus, of a stranger, who by a lucky concurrence of circumstances was just raised to a throne which he had no right to, to inspect too narrowly into the murder of his predecessor, whom he thought no ways related to him? To make public enquiry might only have raised public commotions; and as to the private intelligence, which he might have had from Jocasta, it was certainly a subject too delicate to be touched on when they first came together, and of very little consequence afterwards: it might indeed be the business of the people, and doubtless would have

Dy'd he at Thebes, or in a foreign land?

CREON.

He left his palace, fame reports, to seek
Some oracle; since that, we ne'er beheld him.

OE D I P U S.

But did no messenger return? not one
Of all his train, of whom we might enquire,
Touching this murder?

CREON.

One, and one alone,
Came back, who, flying, 'scaped the gen'ral slaughter;
But nothing, save one little circumstance,
Or knew, or e'er related.

OE D I P U S.

What was that?

Much may be learn'd from that: a little dawn
Of light appearing may discover all.

CREON.

Laius, attack'd by robbers, and oppress'd
By numbers, fell; such is his tale.

L 2

OE D I-

have been, but for a circumstance which seems to have escaped Aristotle and his followers, and is notwithstanding an obvious reason for their silence in this particular: we are told, a few lines below, that the Thebans made no enquiry into the murder of Laius, because their attention was otherwise employ'd.

The Sphinx,

Her dire enigma kept our thoughts intent

On present ills, nor gave us time to search

The past mysterious deed.

This kept every thing quiet for a time, till the affair by degrees naturally sunk into oblivion.

Oppressed by numbers. This proves afterwards not to be true; for OEdipus was alone when he killed Laius; the servant notwithstanding

OE D I P U S.

Wou'd they,

Wou'd robbers do so desperate a deed,
Unbrib'd and unassisted?

C R E O N.

So indeed

Suspicion whisper'd then; but, Laius dead,
No friend was found to vindicate the wrong.

OE D I P U S.

But what strange cause cou'd stop enquiry thus
Into the murder of a king?

C R E O N.

The Sphynx;

Her dire ænigma kept our thoughts intent
On present ills, nor gave us time to search
The past mysterious deed.

OE D I P U S.

Myself will try

Soon to unveil it; thou, Apollo, well,
And well hast thou, my Creon, lent thy aid;
Your OEdipus shall now perform his part;
Yes, I will fight for Phœbus and my country,
And so I ought; for not to friends alone

Or

standing might be supposed to have related the story in this manner,
to excuse his own cowardice, and save the honour of his master.
This falshood was necessary to the carrying on of the plot, which
would otherwise have been too soon unravelled.

Myself will try, &c. Nothing could be better designed than thus
making OEdipus a principal agent in the discovery of his own guilt:
every method, which he makes use of to promote his ease and safe-
ty, tends to his misery and destruction; he endeavours only to find
out the murderer of his wife's first husband; that husband proves
to be his own father, and himself the murderer of that father;
the whole is truly tragical.

Or kindred owe I this, but to myself;
Who murder'd him perchance wou'd murder me:
His cause is mine: wherefore, my children, rise,
Take hence your suppliant boughs, and summon here
The race of Cadmus, my assembled people;
Nought shall be left untry'd: Apollo leads,
And we will rise to joy or sink for ever.

PRIEST.

Haste then, my sons; for this we hither came;
About it quick, and may the god, who sent
This oracle, protect, defend, and save us!

[Exeunt.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

O! thou, great oracle divine,
Who didst to happy Thebes remove

L 3

From

Chorus. The critics are much divided in opinion concerning the persons who compose the chorus of this tragedy. The ancient Greek scholiast assures us that the moment the high-priest of Jupiter, with his attendant train of young men, leave the stage at the end of the last scene, a certain number of the inhabitants of Thebes enter and form the chorus; with this opinion of the scholiast, Mr. Boivin partly agrees; and only adds, that the chorus consisted of the whole body of the people, who, impatient to hear the answer of the oracle, had assembled together, and crowded towards the palace; that the principal citizens take their places on the stage, and speak by their *chéragus* or chief, the rest standing at some distance: in support of this assertion, Mr. Boivin produces several arguments; the most forcible of which is, that OEdipus, in his address to the chorus, calls them the citizens of Thebes and descendants of Cadmus: Mr. Dacier on the other hand affirms, that on the departure of the high-priest, the other priests and sacrificers, who remain on the stage, compose the chorus, which is afterwards joined by the people, whom OEdipus had commanded to assemble, and who could

not

From Delphi's golden shrine,
And in sweet sounds declare the will of Jove;
Daughter

not possibly have been got together so quickly as to enter and make a chorus immediately, according to Boivin: it is much more natural, he says, to suppose that the priests belonging to the several temples, the 'οἱ οὐν γυναικαὶ ἱερεῖς,' who had heard the conversation between Oedipus and Creon, should join in their invocation to Apollo, requesting him to explain the oracle, and deliver their country. Those who are desirous of entering more minutely into the arguments brought by these gentlemen on both sides of the question, will meet with a summary account of it in the *Histoire de l'Academie des inscriptions & Belles Lettres*, Tom. 3. p. 108. Brumoy sides with the scholiast and Boivin, and gives the chorus the title of antient Thebans; alledging only as his reason, that Jocasta calls them *χωρῆς ἀνακτες* 'Princes, or, men of the first rank, in Thebes,' which perhaps might be applied with equal propriety to the priests.

The learned Dr. Burton, whose *Πενταλογία* is just come to my hands, has given us, in his excellent and useful notes on the Oedipus Tyrannus, an opinion in some measure differing from, and perhaps preferable to all the rest: he imagines that Oedipus, the high-priest, &c. retiring, the stage is left in possession of the priests, who form the chorus and sing the first song or intermede during the absence of the king, who returns soon after together with the assembled people; that then the priests go out and give place to a new chorus, composed of the principal citizens of Thebes, who continue on the stage to the end of the drama. This solution of the difficulty is ingenious, but seems to want that kind of confirmation which arises from similitude of practice in the same author: we do not remember any instance in Sophocles of the like conduct with regard to his chorus. The Dr. indeed says, examples are not wanting, and mentions the hymn to Apollo in the *Iphigenia in Tauris* of Euripides, as a similar circumstance; but, besides that the cases are not exactly parallel, it may be sufficient to observe that the conduct of Euripides should by no means determine that of Sophocles, who is infinitely more correct and regular in the plan and disposition of every part of his tragedies, than his illustrious rival. If, after the

Daughter of hope, O! sooth my soul to rest,
And calm the rising tumult in my breast;
Look down, O! Phœbus, on thy lov'd abode;
Speak, for thou know'st the dark decrees of fate,
Our present and our future state,
O! Delian, be thou still our healing God!

ANTISTROPHE I.

Minerva, first on thee I call,
Daughter of Jove, immortal maid,
Low beneath thy feet we fall,
O! bring thy sister Dian to our aid;
Goddess of Thebes, from thy imperial throne
Look with an eye of gentle pity down,
And thou, far-shooting Phœbus, once the friend
Of this unhappy, this devoted land,
O! now if ever let thy hand
Once more be stretch'd to save and to defend!

L 4

STRO-

the ingenious conjectures of these gentlemen, I were to propose my own on this point, it would be, that the same chorus continues from the beginning to the end, and that it consisted of the priests and sacrificers, intermingled with the principal and most antient inhabitants of Thebes.

O! thou great oracle, &c. The first intermede or song of the chorus is a solemn invocation of Apollo and other deities, intreating them to succour Thebes, and pathetically describing the dreadful effects of the pestilence. The whole is, in the original, nobly expressed, and naturally arising from the circumstances of the drama.

The will of Jove. The oracle of Apollo only interpreted the will of Jove, the great father and source of all.

*Quæ Phœbo pater omnipotens mihi Phœbus Apollo
Prædixit,*

says Virgil. Absurd as the Pagan theology was, we frequently find the ancients resolving all power into one supreme Being, called, particularly in Sophocles, by the name of 'Θεός, or the God.

S T R O P H E II.

Great Thebes, my sons, is now no more,
 She falls and ne'er again shall rise,
 Nought can her health or strength restore,
 The mighty nation sinks, she droops, she dies :
 Strip'd of her fruits behold the barren earth ;
 The half-form'd infant struggles for a birth ;
 The mother sinks unequal to her pain :
 Whilst quick as birds in airy circles fly,
 Or lightnings from an angry sky,

Crouds press on crouds to Pluto's dark domain.

A N T I S T R O P H E II.

Behold what heaps of wretches slain,
 Unbury'd, unlamented lye,
 Nor parents now nor friends remain
 To grace their deaths with pious obsequy ;
 The aged matron and the blooming wife,
 Clung to the altars, sue for added life ;
 With sighs and groans united Pæans rise ;
 Re-echo'd still doth great Apollo's name
 Their sorrows and their wants proclaim,
 Frequent to him ascends the sacrifice.

S T R O P H E III.

Haste then, Minerva, beauteous maid,
 Descend in this afflictive hour,
 Haste to thy dying people's aid,
 Drive hence this baneful, this destructive pow'r !
 Who comes not arm'd with hostile sword or shield,
 Yet strews with many a corse th' ensanguin'd field ;
 To Amphitrite's wide-extending bed
 O! drive him, Goddess, from thy fav'rite land,
 Or let him, by thy dread command,
 Bury in Thracian waves his ignominious head.

ANTISTROPHE III.

Father of all, immortal Jove,

O! now thy fiery terrors send;

From thy dreadful stores above

Let lightnings blast him and let thunders rend;

And thou, O! Lydian king, thy aid impart;

Send from thy golden bow, th' unerring dart;

Smile, chaste Diana, on this lov'd abode,

Whilst Theban Bacchus joins the mad'ning throng,

O! God of wine and mirth and song,

Now with thy torch destroy the base inglorious god.

[Exeunt.

ACT

With thy torch, &c. Bacchus is always described with torches; probably in remembrance of his birth, as being born in flames, when his mother Semele was consumed by Jove's lightning. We read of 'the λαμπτήρια εορτή, or feast of torches,' dedicated to this god. Dacier imagines, that the chorus invoke Bacchus with his torches, because wine and fire are the best preservatives against the plague: but this seems to be a mere allegorical and visionary refinement.

A N T I S T R O P H E I I I

A C T II.

S C E N E I.

OEDIPUS, CHORUS, the People assembled.

OEDIPUS.

YOUR pray'rs are heard; and, if you will obey
Your king, and hearken to his words, you soon
Shall find Relief; myself will heal your woes:
I was a stranger to the dreadful deed,
A stranger ev'n to the report till now;
And yet without some traces of the crime
I shou'd not urge this matter; therefore hear me;
I speak to all the citizens of Thebes,
Myself a citizen; observe me well:
If any know the murd'rer of Laius,
Let him reveal it; I command you all;
But if restrain'd by dread of punishment
He hide the secret, let him fear no more;
For nought but exile shall attend the crime
Whene'er confes'd; if by a foreign hand
The horrid deed was done, who points him out
Commands our thanks, and meets a sure reward;
But if there be who knows the murd'rer,
And yet conceals him from us, mark his fate
Which here I do pronounce: let none receive

Throughout

Let none receive, &c. Sophocles has here given us the solemn form of a pagan excommunication, almost as terrible in its circumstances as a pope's bull; this we find frequently denounced against those who were guilty of murder, or any other very heinous crime:

the

Throughout my kingdom, none hold converse with him,
Nor offer pray'r, nor sprinkle o'er his head
The sacred cup; let him be driv'n from all,
By all abandon'd, and by all accurs'd,
For so the delphic oracle declar'd;
And therefore to the gods I pay this duty
And to the dead: O! may the guilty wretch,
Whether alone, or by his impious friends
Assisted, he perform'd the horrid deed,
Deny'd the common benefits of nature,
Wear out a painful life! and O! if here,
Within my palace, I conceal the traitor,
On me and mine alight the vengeful curse!
To you my people, I commit the care
Of this important business; 'tis my cause,
The cause of heav'n, and your expiring country;
Ev'n if the god had nought declar'd, to leave
This crime unexpiated were most ungrateful;
He was the best of kings, the best of men;
That scepter now is mine which Laius bore;

His

the antients believed that nothing could prevent or turn aside such
execrations,

-----dira detestatio

Nulla expiatur victimâ.

Hor. b. 5. od. 3.

We may judge, therefore, what effect this curse must have had on a
superstitious people, when delivered by their sovereign, and how
great their horror and astonishment, when he himself becomes the
unhappy object of it.

Nor sprinkle o'er his head, &c. Before the sacrifice, it was custo-
mary for those, who partook of it, to wash their hands together in
the lustral water, with which they were afterwards sprinkled by the
priests, by way of purification: to be denied this, was always con-
sidered as a mark of guilt and infamy.

His wife is mine; so wou'd his children be
 Did any live; and therefore am I bound,
 Ev'n as he were my father, to revenge him;
 Yes, I will try to find this murderer;
 I owe it to the son of Labdacus,
 To Polydorus, Cadmus, and the race
 Of great Agenor: O! if yet there are,
 Who will not join me in the pious deed,
 From such may earth withhold her annual store,
 And barren be their bed, their life most wretched,
 And their death cruel as the pestilence
 That wastes our city! but on you, my Thebans,
 Who wish us fair success, may justice smile
 Propitious, and the gods for ever bless!

C H O R U S.

O! king, thy imprecations unappal'd
 I hear, and join thee, guiltless of the crime
 Nor knowing who committed it; the god
 Alone, who gave the oracle, must clear
 Its doubtful sense, and point out the offender.

O E D I P U S.

'Tis true; but who shall force the pow'rs divine
 To speak their hidden purpose?

C H O.

So would his children be, &c. By this, the poet means to inform us, that Laius had no other children by Jocasta but OEdipus: it seems indeed essential to this fable, with regard to the constitution of the drama, that it should be so, for reasons sufficiently obvious. Corneille, one of the many unsuccessful followers of Sophocles in this subject, has, notwithstanding, given Laius a daughter by Jocasta, whom he calls Dirce, and makes Theseus in love with her: in the preface to his OEdipus, we find a defence of this episode, which to the judicious reader, will yet appear absolutely indefensible.

TYRANNUS.

157

CHORUS.

One thing more,

If I might speak.

OEDIPUS.

Say on, whate'er thy mind
Shall dictate to thee.

CHORUS.

As amongst the gods
All-knowing Phœbus, so to mortal men
Doth sage Tiresias in foreknowledge sure
Shine forth pre-eminent; perchance his aid
Might much avail us.

OEDIPUS.

Creon did suggest
The same expedient, and by his advice
Twice have I sent for this Tiresias; much
I wonder that he comes not.

CHORUS.

'Tis most fitting
We do consult him; for the idle tales
Which rumour spreads are not to be regarded.

OEDIPUS.

What are those tales? for nought shou'd we despise.

CHO

Say on, &c. In the original, the chorus says, 'let me give you
' a second advice,' to which OEdipus replies, 'if you have a third,
' don't omit it.' This puts one in mind of Hamlet's odd reply to
Rosencraus, 'we shall obey, were she ten times our mother.' Ex-
pressions so uncommon, and purely idiomatical, will not admit of a
literal translation; I have therefore, in this passage, varied the
phrase, and retain'd only the most probable meaning of it.

By his advice. This circumstance is artfully thrown in by the
poet, as it lays a foundation for the suspicion of OEdipus against
Creon, and prepares the spectators for the ensuing quarrel between
them.

OEDIPUS

CHORUS.

'Tis said, some travellers did attack the king.

OEDIPUS.

It is; but still no proof appears.

CHORUS.

And yet,

If it be so, thy dreadful execration

Will force the guilty to confess.

OEDIPUS.

O! no!

Who fears not to commit the crime will ne'er

Be frighted at the curse that follows it.

CHORUS.

Behold he comes, who will discover all,

The holy prophet, see! they lead him hither;

He knows the truth and will reveal it to us.

SCENE II.

TIRESIAS, OEDIPUS, CHORUS.

OEDIPUS.

O! sage Tiresias, thou who knowest all

That can be known, the things of heav'n above

And earth below, whose mental eye beholds,

Blind as thou art, the state of dying Thebes,

And

Blind as thou art. The ancients give us various accounts of the cause of Tiresias's blindness. Ovid, who is perhaps the best poetical authority, tells us, that Tiresias, being appointed by Jupiter and Juno to decide a difference between them, gave his opinion in favour of the former; upon which, the enraged Juno deprived him of his sight; and Jupiter, to make him amends, bestowed on him the gift of prophecy.

And weeps her fate, to thee we look for aid,
On thee alone for safety we depend:
This answer, which perchance thou hast not heard,
Apollo gave: the plague, he said, shou'd cease,
When those who murder'd Laius were discover'd
And paid the forfeit of their crime by death,
Or banishment: O! do not then conceal
Aught that thy art prophetic from the flight
Of birds or other omens may disclose;
O! save thyself, save this afflicted city,
Save OEdipus, avenge the guiltless dead
From this pollution! thou art all our hope;
Remember 'tis the privilege of man,
His noblest function, to assist the wretched.

TIRESIAS.

Alas! what misery it is to know,
When knowledge is thus fatal! O! Tiresias,
Thou art undone! wou'd I had never came!

OEDIPUS.

What say'st thou? whence this strange dejection? speak.

TIRESIAS.

Let me be gone; 'twere better for us both
That I retire in silence, be advised.

OEDIPUS.

It is ingratitude to Thebes who bore
And cherish'd thee, it is unjust to all,
To hide the will of heav'n.

TIRESIAS.

'Tis rash in thee
To ask, and rash I fear will prove my answer.

CHORUS.

O! do not, by the gods, conceal it from us,
Suppliant we all request, we all conjure thee.

TIRE-

T I R E S I A S.

You know not what you ask; I'll not unveil
Your mis'ries to you.

OE D I P U S.

Know'st thou then our fate,
And wilt not tell it? mean'st thou to betray
Thy country and thy king?

T I R E S I A S.

I wou'd not make
Myself and thee unhappy; why thus blame
My tender care, nor listen to my caution?

OE D I P U S.

Wretch as thou art, thou wou'dst provoke a stone,
Inflexible and cruel, still implor'd
And still refusing.

T I R E S I A S.

Thou condemn'st my warmth,
Forgetful of thy own.

OE D I P U S.

Who wou'd not rage
To see an injur'd people treated thus
With vile contempt?

T I R E S I A S.

What is decreed by heav'n
Must come to pass, though I reveal it not.

OE D I-

Thou wouldest provoke a stone. This is a close and literal translation of 'περὶ φασιν σὺν ὀργάνῃς,' 'vel saxum irritare queas.' The unlearned reader may probably think the expression too low and vulgar for the dignity of the bulkin: I have notwithstanding preserved it, because the phrase could not be varied without departing from the original; besides that it serves, amongst many other passages, to point out the remarkable analogy of the Greek language with our own.

OE D I P U S.

Still 'tis thy duty to inform us of it.

T I R E S I A S.

I'll speak no more, not tho' thine anger swell
Ev'n to its utmost.

OE D I P U S.

Nor will I be silent.

I tell thee once for all thou wert thyself
Accomplice in this deed; nay more, I think,
But for thy blindness, woud'st with thy own hand
Have done it too.

T I R E S I A S.

'Tis well; now hear Tiresias;
The sentence, which thou didst thyself proclaim,
Falls on thyself; henceforth shall never man
Hold converse with thee, for thou art accus'd;
The guilty cause of all this city's woes.

OE D I P U S.

Audacious traitor, think'st thou to escape
The hand of vengeance?

T I R E S I A S.

Yes, I fear thee not;
For truth is stronger than a tyrant's arm.

OE D I P U S.

Whence didst thou learn this? was it from thy art?

VOL. II.

M

T I.

Audacious traitor, &c. The character of OEdipus begins now to open upon us, and display itself: we find him presumptuous, self-sufficient, resentful and suspicious; his impiety in contemning the prophet of Apollo in this scene, and his groundless accusation of Creon in the next, diminish our pity for his misfortunes, raise a proper degree of terror in the spectators, and reconcile us to his approaching fate.

T I R E S I A S.

I learn'd it from thyself; thou didst compel me
To speak, unwilling as I was.

OE D I P U S.

Once more

Repeat it then, that I may know my fate
More plainly still.

T I R E S I A S.

Is it not plain already?

Or mean'st thou but to tempt me?

OE D I P U S.

No; but say,

Speak it again.

T I R E S I A S.

Again then I declare

Thou art thyself the murth'rer whom thou seek'st.

OE D I P U S.

A second time thou shalt not pass unpunish'd.

T I R E S I A S.

What woud'st thou say, if I shou'd tell thee all?

OE D I P U S.

Say what thou wilt; for all is false.

T I R E S I A S.

Know then,

That OEdipus, in shameful bonds united
With those he loves, unconscious of his guilt,
Is yet most guilty.

OE D I P U S.

Dar'st thou utter more,

And hope for pardon?

T I R E S I A S.

Yes, if there be strength

In sacred truth.

OE D I-

OE D I P U S.

But truth dwells not in thee :

Thy body and thy mind are dark alike,
For both are blind ; thy ev'ry sense is lost.

T I R E S I A S.

Thou dost upbraid me with the loss of that
For which thyself e'er long shalt meet reproach
From ev'ry tongue.

OE D I P U S.

Thou blind and impious traitor !

Thy darkness is thy safeguard, or this hour
Had been thy last.

T I R E S I A S.

It is not in my fate

To fall by thee ; Apollo guards his priest.

OE D I P U S.

Was this the tale of Creon, or thy own ?

T I R E S I A S.

Creon is guiltless, and the crime is thine.

OE D I P U S.

O ! riches, pow'r, dominion, and thou far
Above them all, the best of human blessings,
Excelling wisdom, how doth envy love
To follow and oppress you ! this fair kingdom,
Which by the nation's choice, and not my own,
I here possess, Creon, my faithful friend,
For such I thought him once, wou'd now wrest from me,
And hath suborn'd this vile impostor here,
This wand'ring hypocrite, of sharpest sight
When int'rest prompts, but ignorant and blind
When fools consult him ; tell me, prophet, where
Was all thy art, when the abhorred Sphynx
Alarm'd our city ? wherefore did not then

Thy wisdom save us? then the man divine
 Was wanting; but thy birds refus'd their omens,
 Thy god was silent; then came OEdipus,
 This poor, unlearned, uninstructed sage;
 Who not from birds uncertain omens drew,
 But by his own sagacious mind explor'd
 The hidden mystery; and now thou com'st
 To cast me from the throne my wisdom gain'd,
 And share with Creon my divided empire:
 But you shou'd both lament your ill-got pow'r,
 You and your bold compeer; for thee, this moment,
 But that I bear respect unto thy age,
 I'd make thee rue thy execrable purpose.

C H O R U S.

You both are angry, therefore both to blame;
 Much rather shou'd you join, with friendly zeal
 And mutual ardour, to explore the will
 Of all-deciding heav'n.

T I R E S I A S.

What though thou rul'st
 O'er Thebes despotic, we are equal here;
 I am Apollo's subject, and not thine;
 Nor want I Creon to protect me. No;
 I tell thee, king, this blind Tiresias tells thee,
 Seeing thou see'st not, know'st not where thou art,
 What, or with whom: canst thou inform me who
 Thy parents are, and what thy horrid crimes
 'Gainst thy own race, the living and the dead?
 A father's and a mother's curse attend thee;
 Soon shall their furies drive thee from the land,
 And leave thee dark like me; what mountain then,

Or

What mountain then. In the original, it is, what Cithæron? Ci-
 thæron

Or conscious shore, shall not return the groans
Of OEdipus, and echo to his woes?
When thou shalt look on the detested bed,
And in that haven, where thou hop'ft to rest,
Shalt meet with storm and tempest; then what ills
Shall fall on thee and thine! now vent thy rage
On old Tiresias, and the guiltless Creon;
We shall be soon aveng'd, for ne'er did heav'n
Cut off a wretch so base, so vile as thou art.

OE D I P U S.

Must I bear this from thee? away, begone,
Home, villain, home.

T I R E S I A S.

I did not come to thee

Unsent for.

OE D I P U S.

Had I thought thou woud'ft have thus
Insulted me, I had not call'd thee hither.

T I R E S I A S.

Perhaps thou hold'ft Tiresias as a fool,
And madman; but thy parents thought me wise.

OE D I P U S.

My parents, said'ft thou? speak, who were my parents?

T I R E S I A S.

This day, that gives thee life, shall give thee death.

M 3

OE D I-

thæron was the mountain where OEdipus was exposed when an infant; this, therefore, has a remarkable propriety, but could not be expressed in the translation.

This day, &c. That is, 'this day, which shall discover who thy parents are that gave thee life, shall also, by that discovery, cause thy death, when thou shalt be found the murderer of thy father: he tells him afterwards, that his virtues had undone him, which was literally

OE D I P U S.

Still dark, and still perplexing are the words
Thou utter'st.

T I R E S I A S.

'Tis thy business to unriddle,
And therefore thou can'st best interpret them.

OE D I P U S.

Thou dost reproach me for my virtues.

T I R E S I A S.

They,

And thy good fortune, have undone thee.

OE D I P U S.

Since

I sav'd the city, I'm content.

T I R E S I A S.

Farewel.

Boy, lead me hence.

OE D I P U S.

Away with him, for here

His presence but disturbs us; being gone,
We shall be happier.

T I R E S I A S.

OEdipus, I go,

But first inform me, for I fear thee not,

Wherefore I came; know then, I came to tell thee,

The man thou seek'st, the man on whom thou pour'dst

Thy

literally true, as his wisdom in expounding the riddle of the Sphinx, and his good fortune in being saved by the shepherd in his infancy, gave him the opportunity of committing those crimes which he could otherwise never have been guilty of. The affected obscurity of Tiresias's predictions keeps the spectators in a proper suspense, and, at the same time, throws an air of solemnity over the scene, which renders it more interesting.

Thy execrations, ev'n the murtherer
 Of Laius, now is here; a seeming stranger
 And yet a Theban; he shall suffer soon
 For all his crimes; from light and affluence driv'n
 To penury and darkness, poor and blind,
 Prop'd on his staff, and from his native land
 Expell'd; I see him in a foreign clime
 A helpless wand'rer; to his sons at once,
 A father, and a brother; child, and husband
 Of her from whom he sprang: adulterous,
 Incestuous parricide, now fare thee well;
 Go, learn the truth, and if it be not so,
 Say I have ne'er deserv'd the name of prophet.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E I.

When will the guilty wretch appear,
 Whom Delphi's sacred oracle demands;
 Author of crimes too black for mortal ear,
 Dipping in royal blood his sacrilegious hands?
 Swift as the storm by rapid whirlwinds driv'n,
 Quick let him fly th' impending wrath of heav'n;
 For lo! the angry son of Jove,
 Arm'd with red lightnings from above,
 Pursues the murth'rer with immortal hate,
 And round him spreads the snares of unrelenting fate.

M 4

A N-

When will the guilty, &c. This is the second intermede, or song of the chorus, who, divided between hope and fear, concerning the murder of Laius, express their sentiments on this occasion: their respect and veneration for the character of Tiresias, incline them to believe him; whilst, on the other hand, their regard for OEdipus would persuade them to question the prophet's veracity; they determine therefore in favour of their sovereign, and conclude him innocent.

ANTISTROPHE I.

From steep Parnassus' rocky cave,
 Cover'd with snow, came forth the dread command;
 Apollo thence his sacred mandate gave,
 To search the man of blood through ev'ry land:
 Silent, and sad, the weary wand'rer roves,
 O'er pathless rocks, and solitary groves,
 Hoping to 'scape the wrath divine,
 Denounc'd from great Apollo's shrine;
 Vain hopes to 'scape the fate by heav'n decreed;
 For vengeance hovers still o'er his devoted head.

STROPHE II.

Tiresias, fam'd for wisdom's lore,
 Hath dreadful ills to OEdipus divin'd;
 And as his words mysterious I explore,
 Unnumber'd doubts perplex my anxious mind,
 Now rais'd by hope, and now with fears oppress'd,
 Sorrow and joy alternate fill my breast:
 How shou'd these hapless kings be foes,
 When never strife between them rose!
 Or why shou'd Laius, slain by hands unknown,
 Bring foul disgrace on Polybus' unhappy son?

ANTISTROPHE II.

From Phœbus and all-seeing Jove
 Nought can be hid of actions here below;
 But earthly prophets may deceitful prove,
 And little more than other mortals know:

Though

Polybus's unhappy son. This circumstance pleads strongly in favour of OEdipus, who is still supposed to be the son of Polybus; it was not therefore probable, that he should murder a man who had never injured him, and with whom he could have no connection.

Though much in wisdom man doth man excel,
In all that's human error still must dwell:

Cou'd he commit the bloody deed,

Who from the Sphynx our city freed?

O! no! he never shed the guiltless blood,
The Sphynx declares him wise, and innocent, and good,

[Exeunt,

ACT III.

SCENE I.

CREON, CHORUS.

CREON.

O! CITIZENS, with grief I hear your king
Hath blasted the fair fame of guiltless Creon
And most unjustly brands me with a crime
My soul abhors: whilst desolation spreads
On ev'ry side, and universal ruin
Hang's o'er the land, if I in word or deed
Cou'd join to swell the woes of hapless Thebes,
I were unworthy, nay I wou'd not wish
To live another day: alas, my friends,
Thus to be deem'd a traitor to my country,
To you my fellow-citizens, to all
That hear me, O! 'tis infamy, and shame;
I cannot, will not bear it.

CHORUS.

'Twas th' effect

Of sudden anger only, what he said
But cou'd not think

CREON.

Who told him I stubborn'd

The

The prophet to speak falsely? what cou'd raise
This vile suspicion?

CHORUS.

Such he had, but whence

I know not.

CREON.

Talk'd he thus with firm composure
And confidence of mind?

CHORUS.

I cannot say;

'Tis not for me to know the thoughts of kings,
Or judge their actions; but behold, he comes.

SCENE II.

OE D I P U S, CREON, CHORUS.

OE D I P U S.

Ha! Creon here? and dar'st thou thus approach
My palace, thou who would'st have murder'd me,
And ta'en my kingdom? by the gods I ask thee,
Answer me, traitor, did'st thou think me fool,
Or coward, that I cou'd not see thy arts,
Or had not strength to vanquish them? what madness,
What strange infatuation led thee on,
Without or force, or friends, to grasp at empire,
Which only their united force can give?
What wert thou doing?

CREON.

Hear what I shall answer,
Then judge impartial.

OE D I P U S.

Thou can'st talk it well,

But

But I shall ne'er attend to thee; thy guilt
Is plain; thou art my deadliest foe.

CREON.

But hear

What I shall urge.

OE D I P U S.

Say not thou'r't innocent.

CREON.

If self-opinion void of reason seem
Conviction to thee, know, thou err'st most grossly.

OE D I P U S.

And thou more grossly, if thou think'st to pass
Unpunish'd for this inj'ry to thy friend.

CREON.

I shou'd not, were I guilty; but what crime
Have I committed? tell me.

OE D I P U S.

Wert not thou

The man who urg'd me to require the aid
Of your all-knowing prophet?

CREON.

True, I was;

I did persuade you; so I wou'd again.

OE D I P U S.

How long is it since Laius---

CREON.

Laius? what?

OE D I P U S.

Since Laius fell by hands unknown?

CREON.

A long,

Long tract of years.

OE D I.

OEDIPUS.

Was this Tiresias then

A prophet?

CREON.

Ay! in wisdom and in fame

As now excelling.

OEDIPUS.

Did he then say aught

Concerning me?

CREON.

I never heard he did.

OEDIPUS.

Touching this murder, did you ne'er enquire

Who were the authors?

CREON.

Doubtless: but in vain.

OEDIPUS.

Why did not this same prophet then inform you?

CREON.

I know not that, and when I'm ignorant

I'm always silent.

OEDIPUS.

What concerns thyself.

At least thou know'st, and therefore shoud'st declare it.

CREON.

What is it? speak; and if 'tis in thy pow'r,

I'll answer thee.

OEDIPUS.

Thou know'st, if this Tiresias

Had not combin'd with thee, he wou'd not thus.

Accuse me; as the murderer of Laius.

CREON.

What he declares, thou best can'st tell: of me,

What

What thou requir'st, myself am yet to learn.

OE D I P U S.

Go, learn it then; but ne'er shalt thou discover
That OEdipus is guilty.

C R E O N.

Art not thou?

My sister's husband?

OE D I P U S.

Granted.

C R E O N.

Join'd with her,

Thou rul'st o'er Thebes.

OE D I P U S.

'Tis true, and all she asks

Most freely do I give her.

C R E O N.

Is not Creon

In honour next to you?

OE D I P U S.

Thou art; and therefore

The more ungrateful.

C R E O N.

Hear what I shall plead,

And thou wilt never think so: tell me, prince,

Is there a man, who wou'd prefer a throne

With all its dangers to an equal rank

In

Join'd with her, &c. Creon, as brother to the queen, and presumptive heir to the crown after the death of Laius, had reason to think himself aggrieved by the marriage of OEdipus, and his succession to the kingdom of Thebes; a circumstance which, though unobserved by the commentators, accounts in the most probable manner for the strong suspicions of the one, and the warm resentment of the other.

In peace and safety? I am not of those
 Who chuse the name of king before the pow'r;
 Fools only make such wishes: I have all
 From thee, and fearless I enjoy it all:
 Had I the sceptre, often must I act
 Against my will; know then, I am not yet
 So void of sense and reason, as to quit
 A real 'vantage for a seeming good:
 Am I not happy, am I not rever'd,
 Embrac'd, and lov'd by all? to me they come
 Who want thy favour, and by me acquire it:
 What then should Creon wish for; shall he leave
 All this for empire? bad desires corrupt
 The fairest mind: I never entertain'd
 A thought so vile, nor wou'd I lend my aid
 To forward such base purposes: but go
 To Delphos, ask the sacred oracle
 If I have spoke the truth; if there you find
 That with the prophet I conspir'd, destroy
 The guilty Creon; not thy voice alone
 Shall then condemn me, for myself will join
 In the just sentence; but accuse me not
 On weak suspicion's most uncertain test;
 Justice wou'd never call the wicked good,
 Or brand fair virtue with the name of vice,
 Unmerited: to cast away a friend
 Faithful and just, is to deprive ourselves
 Of life and being, which we hold most dear:
 But time and time alone revealeth all;
 That only shews the good man's excellence;
 A day sufficeth to unmask the wicked.

C H O R U S.

O! king, his caution merits your regard

Who

Who judge in haste do seldom judge aright.

OE D I P U S.

When they are quick who plot against my life,

'Tis fit I shou'd be quick in my defence ;

If I am tame and silent, all they wish

Will soon be done, and OEdipus must fall.

CREON.

What wou'dst thou have? my banishment?

OE D I P U S.

Thy death.

CREON.

But first inform me wherefore I shou'd die.

OE D I P U S.

Dost thou rebel then? wilt thou not submit?

CREON.

Not when I see thee thus deceiv'd.

OE D I P U S.

'Tis fit

I shou'd defend my own.

CREON.

And so shou'd I.

OE D I P U S.

Thou art a traitor.

CREON.

What if it shou'd prove

I am not so.

OE D I P U S.

A king must be obey'd.

CREON.

Not if his orders are unjust.

OE D I-

Not if his orders are unjust. This republican sentiment, though extremely well adapted to an Athenian audience, is but ill suited to the

OEDIPUS.

O! Thebes!

O! citizens!

CREON.

I too can call on Thebes;

She is my country.

CHORUS.

O! no more, my lords,

For see, Jocasta comes in happiest hour

To end your contest.

SCENE III.

JOCASTA, CREON, OEDIPUS, CHORUS.

JOCASTA.

Whence this sudden tumult?

O! princes, is this well? at such a time

With idle broils to multiply the woes

Of wretched Thebes? Home, home, for shame, nor thus

With private quarrels swell the public ruin.

CREON.

Sister, thy husband hath most basely us'd me;

He threatens me with banishment or death.

OEDIPUS.

the taste of an arbitrary government. Mr. Dacier has therefore, with the true spirit of a Frenchman, apologized in his notes, for this freedom; he observes, that the Christian religion teaches us to obey not only good, but the worst of princes, and asserts, that to oblige kings to give a reason for their actions, is the highest injustice, being in fact no less a crime than to turn kings into subjects, and subjects into kings: were an Englishman to comment on this passage, he would perhaps be of a direct contrary opinion, and prefer the sentiment of Sophocles to that of the French critic.

OE D I P U S.

I do confess it; for he did conspire
With vile and wicked arts against my life.

C R E O N.

O! may I never prosper, but accurs'd,
Unpity'd, perish if I ever did.

J O C A S T A.

Believe him, OEdipus; revere the gods
Whom he contests, if thou dost love Jocasta;
Thy subjects beg it of thee.

C H O R U S.

Hear, O! king;
Consider, we entreat thee.

OE D I P U S.

What woud'st have?
Think you I'll e'er submit to him?

C H O R U S.

Revere
His character, his oath, both pleading for him.

OE D I P U S.

But know you what you ask?

C H O R U S.

We do.

OE D I P U S.

What is it?

C H O R U S.

We ask thee to believe a guiltless friend,
Nor cast him forth dishonour'd thus, on slight
Suspicion's weak surmise.

OE D I P U S.

Requesting this,
You do request my banishment, or death.

O E D I P U S

C H O R U S.

No; by yon leader of the heavenly host,
 Th' immortal sun, I had not such a thought;
 I only felt for Thebes' distressful state,
 And wou'd not have it by domestic strife
 Embitter'd thus.

O E D I P U S.

Why, let him then depart:
 If OEdipus must die, or leave his country,
 For shameful exile, be it so; I yield
 To thy request, not his; for hateful still
 Shall Creon ever be.

C R E O N.

Thy stubborn soul
 Bends with reluctance, and when anger fires it
 Is terrible; but natures form'd like thine
 Are their own punishment.

O E D I P U S.

Wilt thou not hence?
 Wilt not be gone?

C R E O N.

I go; thou know'st me not;
 But these will do me justice. [Exit Creon.

S C E N E IV.

J O C A S T A, O E D I P U S, C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

Princess, now,
 Persuade him to retire.

J O C A S T A.

First, let me know

The

The cause of this dissention.

CHORUS.

From reports

Uncertain, and suspicions most injurious,

The quarrel rose.

JOCASTA.

Was th' accusation mutual?

CHORUS.

It was.

JOCASTA.

What follow'd then?

CHORUS.

Ask me no more;

Enough's already known; we'll not repeat

The woes of hapless Thebes.

OE D I P U S.

You are all blind,

Insensible, unjust; you love me not,

Yet boast your piety.

CHORUS.

I said before,

Again I say, that not to love my king

Ev'n as myself wou'd mark me for the worst

Of men; for thou did'st save expiring Thebes:

O! rise once more, protect, preserve thy country!

JOCASTA.

O! king, inform me, whence this strange dissention?

OE D I P U S.

I'll tell thee, my Jocasta, for thou know'st

The love I bear thee, what this wicked Creon

Did artfully devise against me.

JOCASTA.

Speak it,

If he indeed be guilty.

OEDIPUS.

Creon says

That I did murder Laius.

JOCASTA.

Spake he this,

As knowing it himself, or from another?

OEDIPUS.

He had suborn'd that evil-working priest;
And sharpens ev'ry tongue against his king.

JOCASTA.

Let not a fear perplex thee, OEdipus;
Mortals know nothing of futurity,
And these prophetic seers are all impostors;
I'll prove it to thee: know then, Laius once,
Not from Apollo, but his priests, receiv'd
An oracle, which said, it was decreed
He shou'd be slain by his own son, the offspring
Of Laius and Jocasta; yet he fell
By strangers, murder'd, for so fame reports,
By robbers in the place where three ways meet:
A son was born, but e'er three days had past,
The infant's feet were bor'd; a servant took
And left him on the pathless mountain's top,
To perish there: thus Phœbus ne'er decreed
That he shou'd kill his father, or that Laius,
Which much he fear'd, shou'd by his son be slain:
Such is the truth of oracles; henceforth
Regard them not; what heav'n wou'd have us know,
It can with ease unfold, and will reveal it.

OEDIPUS.

OEDIPUS.

What thou hast said, Jocasta, much disturbs me;
I tremble at it.

JOCASTA.

Wherefore shou'dst thou fear?

OEDIPUS.

Methought I heard thee say, Laius was slain
Where three ways meet.

JOCASTA.

'Twas so reported then,
And is so still.

OEDIPUS.

Where happen'd the misfortune?

JOCASTA.

In Phocis, where the roads unite that lead
To Delphi and to Daulia.

OEDIPUS.

How long since?

JOCASTA.

A little time e'er you began to reign
O'er Thebes, we heard it.

N 3

OE D I-

What thou hast said, &c. The conduct of the fable, throughout this play, cannot be sufficiently admired; every thing advanced by Jocasta, to destroy the force of the oracle, tends to confirm it; and every argument, which she brings to remove the fears of OEdipus, increases them: the whole visibly calculated to impress this moral and religious truth on the minds of the audience, viz. that whatever is decreed by divine providence must inevitably come to pass; and that all the means, which are made use of by men to counteract its designs, do, in the end, only promote and forward the accomplishment of them: nothing can be more interesting than the followning scene between OEdipus and Jocasta.

OEDIPUS.

O! almighty Jove!

What wilt thou do with me?

JOCASTA.

Why talk'st thou thus?

OEDIPUS.

Ask me no more; but tell me of this Laius,

What was his age, and stature?

JOCASTA.

He was tall;

His hairs just turning to the silver hue;

His form not much unlike thy own.

OEDIPUS.

O! me!

Sure I have call'd down curses on myself

Unknowing.

JOCASTA.

Ha! what say'st thou, OEdipus?

I tremble whilst I look on thee.

OEDIPUS.

O! much

I fear, the prophet saw too well; but say,

One thing will make it clear.

JOCASTA.

I dread to hear it;

Yet speak, and I will tell thee.

OEDIPUS.

Went he forth

With few attendants, or a num'rous train,

In kingly pomp?

JO-

With few attendants. Dacier laughs, with some reason, at the absurdity of Seneca, who, in his ridiculous refinement on Sophocles, equips

JOCASTA.

They were but five in all;
The herald with them; but one chariot there,
Which carried Laius.

OE D I P U S.

O! 'tis but too plain:
Who brought the news?

JOCASTA.

A servant, who alone
Escap'd with life.

OE D I P U S.

That servant, is he here?

JOCASTA.

O! no! his master slain, when he return'd
And saw thee on the throne of Thebes, with pray'r
Most earnest he beseech'd me to dismiss him,
That he might leave this city, where he wish'd
No longer to be seen, but to retire,
And feed my flocks; I granted his request;
For that and more his honest services
Had merited.

OE D I P U S.

I beg he may be sent for
Immediately.

N 4

J O-

equips Laius with a large retinue; but informs us, that great part of his guards lost their way, and left his majesty with only two or three footmen in a by-place. 'Voilà (says the French critic) une belle invention, de faire égarer les gardes dans un voyage de Thebes à Delphes, c'est à dire, dans un chemin aussi connue que celui de Paris à Versailles, & presque aussi fréquenté.' Mr. Dacier is right in his criticism; but to expose the errors of Seneca would be an endless and unnecessary task; the truest idea of the merit of Sophocles might perhaps be formed by an accurate comparison of his Oedipus with that of his Roman rival.

OE D I P U S

J O C A S T A.

He shall; but wherefore is it?

OE D I P U S.

I fear thou'lt said too much, and therefore wish
To see him.

J O C A S T A.

He shall come; but, O! my lord,

Am I not worthy to be told the cause
Of this distress?

OE D I P U S.

Thou art, and I will tell thee;

Thou art my hope; to whom shou'd I impart
My sorrows, but to thee? Know then, Jocasta,
I am the son of Polybus, who reigns
At Corinth, and the Dorian Merope
His queen; there long I held the foremost rank,
Honour'd and happy, when a strange event,
(For strange it was, tho' little meriting
The deep concern I felt) alarm'd me much;
A drunken rev'ller at a feast proclaim'd
That I was only the supposed son
Of Corinth's king; scarce cou'd I bear that day
The vile reproach; the next, I sought my parents,
And ask'd of them the truth; they too, enrag'd,
Resented much the base indignity;
I lik'd their tender warmth, but still I felt
A secret anguish, and unknown to them,
Sought out the Pythian oracle; in vain;
Touching my parents, nothing cou'd I learn;
But dreadful were the mis'ries it denounc'd
Against me; 'twas my fate, Apollo said,
To wed my mother, to produce a race
Accursed and abhorr'd; and last, to slay

My

My father who begat me ; sad decree !
 Left I shou'd e'er fulfil the dire prediction,
 Instant I fled from Corinth, by the stars
 Guiding my hapless journey to the place
 Where thou report'st this wretched king was slain ;
 But I will tell thee the whole truth ; at length
 I came to where the three ways meet ; when, lo !
 A herald, with another man like him
 Whom thou describ'st, and in a chariot, met me ;
 Both strove with violence to drive me back ;
 Enrag'd I struck the charioteer, when strait,
 As I advanc'd, the old man saw, and twice
 Smote me o'th' head, but dearly soon repay'd
 The insult on me ; from his chariot roll'd
 Prone on the earth, beneath my staff he fell,
 And instantly expir'd : th' attendant train
 All shar'd his fate : if this unhappy stranger
 And Laius be the same, lives there a wretch
 So curs'd, so hateful to the gods as I am ?
 Nor citizen, nor alien must receive,
 Or converse, or communion hold with me,
 But drive me forth with infamy and shame ;
 The dreadful curse pronounc'd with my own lips
 Shall soon o'ertake me : I have stain'd the bed

Of

By the stars, &c. Most of the commentators on this passage have considered it merely as a proverbial expression, applied in general to all who made long and dangerous journeys, and only alluding to the custom of navigators, who were directed in their voyages by the stars ; but as astronomy was in great esteem amongst the antients, it is perhaps most probable that they guided themselves by land, as well as by sea, according to the course and situation of those luminaries : there is therefore no occasion to have recourse to a proverb for the expression, especially as the method of travelling is in practice, in some parts of the world, even to this day.

Of him whom I had murth'rd ; am I then
 Aught but pollution ? if I fly from hence,
 The bed of incest meets me, and I go
 To slay my father Polybus, the best,
 The tend'rest parent ; this must be the work
 Of some malignant pow'r : ye righteous gods,
 Let me not see that day, but rest in death,
 Rather than suffer such calamity.

C H O R U S.

O ! king, we pity thy distress ; but wait
 With patience his arrival, and despair not.

OE D I P U S.

That shepherd is my only hope : Jocasta,
 Wou'd he were here !

J O C A S T A.

Suppose he were ; what then ?

What woud'st thou do ?

OE D I P U S.

I'll tell thee ; if he says
 The same as thou dost, I am safe, and guiltless.

J O C A S T A.

What said I then ?

OE D I P U S.

Thou said'st he did report

Laius

My father Polybus, &c. The plot advances gradually, and as it were insensibly, to the utmost point of perfection : OEdipus is already but too well convinced that he is the murth'rer of Laius, but still believes himself the son of Polybus and Merope. If the casual murth'ring of a stranger, and the marriage of his widow, makes him so unhappy ; what will be his condition, when he discovers that stranger to be his father, and that widow, his mother ?

His arrival. The arrival of the shepherd mentioned by Jocasta, whom we shall find of signal service in keeping up the attention of the spectators and protracting the catastrophe.

Laius was slain by robbers ; if 'tis true
He fell by numbers, I am innocent,
For I was unattended ; if but one
Attack'd and slew him, doubtless I am he.

J O C A S T A.

Be satisfy'd it must be as he first
Reported it ; he cannot change the tale ;
Not I alone, but the whole city heard it :
Or grant he shou'd, the oracle was ne'er
Fulfill'd ; for Phœbus said, Jocasta's son
Shou'd slay his father ; that cou'd never be ;
For, O ! Jocasta's son long since is dead ;
He cou'd not murther Laius ; therefore, never
Will I attend to prophecies again.

O E D I P U S.

Right, my Jocasta ; but, I beg thee, send
And fetch this shepherd ; do not fail.

J O C A S T A.

I will
This moment ; come, my lord, let us go in ;
I will do nothing but what pleases thee.

[Exeunt.

S C E N E V.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E I.

Grant me henceforth, ye pow'rs divine,
In virtue's purest paths to tread !

In

Grant me henceforth, &c. This is the third intermede or song of
the chorus ; who shock'd at the impiety of Jocasta, in questioning
the truth of the oracle, agreeably to their office and character, de-
clare

In ev'ry word, in ev'ry deed,
 May sanctity of manners ever shine !
 Obedient to the laws of Jove,
 The laws descended from above,
 Which, not like those by feeble mortals giv'n,
 Bury'd in dark oblivion lye,
 Or worn by time decay, and die,
 But bloom eternal like their native heav'n !

A N T I S T R O P H E I.

Pride first gave birth to tyranny :
 That hateful vice, insulting pride,
 When, ev'ry human pow'r defy'd,
 She lifts to glory's heighth her votary ;
 Soon stumbling, from her tott'ring throne
 She throws the wretched victim down :
 But may the god indulgent hear my pray'r,
 That god whom humbly I adore,
 O ! may he smile on Thebes once more,
 And take it's wretched monarch to his care !

S T R O P H E II.

Perish the impious and prophane,
 Who, void of reverential fear,
 Nor justice, nor the laws revere,
 Who leave their god for pleasure or for gain !
 Who swell by fraud their ill-got store,

Who

clare their abhorrence of such presumption, and deprecate the wrath of the gods, which must inevitably fall on the delinquent: the whole is full of noble and religious sentiments adapted to the subject.

Perish the impious, &c. This apparently glances at the conduct of Jocasta in the preceding scene; though the chorus, out of respect to their sovereign, express themselves in general terms, and rather seem to exculpate themselves than to accuse her.

Who rob the wretched and the poor !
 If vice unpunish'd virtue's meed obtain,
 Who shall refrain the impetuous soul,
 The rebel passions who controul,
 Or wherefore do I lead this choral train ?

ANTISTROPHE II.

No more to Delphi's sacred shrine
 Need we with incense now repair,
 No more shall Phocis hear our pray'r,
 Nor fair Olympia see her rites divine ;
 If oracles no longer prove
 The pow'r of Phœbus and of Jove :
 Great lord of all, from thy eternal throne
 Behold, how impious men defame
 Thy lov'd Apollo's honour'd name ;
 O ! guard his rights, and vindicate thy own.

[Exeunt.

ACT

If vice unpunished, &c. ' If vice, says the chorus, meets with
 ' the reward of virtue, who will be good and virtuous, or why
 ' should we sacrifice to the gods ?' We meet with a parallel passage
 in holy writ.

' I was grieved at the wicked (says David) I do see the ungodly
 ' in such prosperity, these prosper in the world, and these have
 ' riches in possession ; and I said, then have I cleansed my heart in
 ' vain, and washed my hands in innocency.' Psal. lxxiii.

No more to Delphi's, &c. It was usual to depute certain priests from
 every temple to carry offerings to the temple of Apollo, and to as-
 sist at the assemblies of Greece, particularly at Olympia, or Pisa, a
 city of Elis in the Peloponnesus, famous for the Olympic games, and
 the temple of Jupiter.

A C T IV.

S C E N E I.

J O C A S T A, C H O R U S.

J O C A S T A.

S A G E S and rulers of the land, I come
 To seek the altars of the gods, and there
 With incense and oblations to appease
 Offended heav'n : my OEdipus, alas !
 No longer wise and prudent, as you all
 Remember once he was, with present things
 Compares the past, nor judges like himself ;
 Unnumber'd cares perplex his anxious mind,
 And ev'ry tale awakes new terrors in him ;
 Vain is my counsel, for he hears me not.
 First then, to thee, O ! Phœbus, for thou still

Art

Sages and rulers, &c. The title of *Ἀρχαῖται*, or rulers, with which Jocasta salutes the chorus, plainly points out to us the age and dignity of those who composed it, being only given to the guardians and defenders of their country. Jocasta, we see, alarmed at the despondency and miserable condition of OEdipus, enters with boughs of supplication in her hand, and is going with great humility to the temples of the gods, whose oracles she had just before treated with contempt : so natural is the transition from open impiety and presumption to servile fears, and enthusiastic superstition.

First then to thee, &c. The words ' ἀρχαῖστος γὰρ εἰ, ' thou art the nearest,' have puzzled the commentators. I have ventured to give them a figurative sense, as most agreeable to the context. There is, I think, a propriety in her first and particular application to Apollo on this occasion, as it was probably meant to make amends for her former impiety and contempt of him.

Art near to help the wretched, we appeal;
And suppliant beg thee now to grant thy aid
Propitious; deep is our distress; for, O!
We see our pilot sinking at the helm,
And much already fear the vessel lost.

S C E N E II.

SHEPHERD from Corinth, JOCASTA, CHORUS.

SHEPHERD.

Can you instruct me, strangers, which way lies
The palace of king OEdipus; himself
I wou'd most gladly see; can you inform me?

CHORUS.

This is the palace; he is now within;
Thou see'st his queen before thee.

SHEPHERD.

Ever blest

And happy with the happy may'st thou live!

JOCASTA.

Stranger, the same good wish to thee, for well
Thy words deserve it; but say, wherefore com'st thou,
And what's thy news?

SHEPHERD.

To thee, and to thy husband,

Pleasure, and joy.

JO-

With the happy, &c. There is something remarkable in this wish;
'may'st thou live, not only happy thyself, but with those who are
'so!' Sophocles knew that a good mind, even in the midst of af-
fluence, could enjoy no felicity, whilst there were scenes of misery,
and distress before it; and that all human happiness is increased by
participation.

J O C A S T A.

What pleasure? and whence art thou?

S H E P H E R D.

From Corinth: to be brief, I bring thee tidings
Of good and evil.

J O C A S T A.

Ha! what mean thy words

Ambiguous?

S H E P H E R D.

Know then, if report say true,
The Isthmian people will choose OEdipus
Their sov'reign.

J O C A S T A.

Is not Polybus their king?

S H E P H E R D.

No; Polybus is dead.

J O C A S T A.

What say'st thou? dead?

S H E P H E R D.

If I speak falsely, may death seize on me!

J O C A S T A.

[To one of her attendants.

Why say'st thou not to tell thy master? hence!

What

The Isthmian people. The people of Corinth; so called from the famous Isthmus there.

Polybus is dead. This peripetie, or change of fortune, arising so naturally, and so agreeably bringing on the catastrophe, has been deservedly celebrated by the critics: the news of Polybus's death, and the discovery of his not being the father of OEdipus, instead of delivering that unfortunate king from all his fears, becomes the means of displaying his guilt, and involving him in ruin and destruction: nothing, as Aristotle observes, can be more compleatly tragical.

What are you now, you oracles divine!
Where is your truth? the fearful OEdipus,
From Corinth fled, lest he shou'd slay the king,
This Polybus, who perish'd, not by him,
But by the hand of heav'n.

SCENE III.

OEDIPUS, JOCASTA, SHEPHERD, CHORUS.

OEDIPUS.

My dear Jocasta,
Why hast thou call'd me hither?

JOCASTA.

Hear this man,
And when thou hear'st him, mark what faith is due
To your revered oracles.

OEDIPUS.

Who is he?
And what doth he report?

JOCASTA.

He comes from Corinth;
And says, thy father Polybus is dead.

OEDIPUS.

What say'st thou, stranger? speak to me, O! speak.

SHEPHERD.

If touching this thou first desir'st my answer;
Know, he is dead.

OEDIPUS.

How dy'd he? say, by treason,
Or some disease?

SHEPHERD.

Alas! a little force

Will lay to rest the weary limbs of age.

OE D I P U S.

Distemper then did kill him?

S H E P H E R D.

That in part,

And part a length of years that wore him down.

OE D I P U S.

Now, my Jocasta, who shall henceforth trust
To prophecies, and seers, and clam'rous birds
With their vain omens: they who had decreed
That I shou'd kill my father? he, thou seest
Beneath the earth lies buried, whilst I live
In safety here, and guiltless of his blood:
Unless perhaps sorrow for loss of me
Shorten'd his days, thus only cou'd I kill
My father; but he's gone, and to the shades
Hath carry'd with him those vain oracles
Of fancy'd ills, no longer worth my care.

J O C A S T A.

Did I not say it wou'd be thus?

OE D I P U S.

Thou didst;

But I was full of fears.

J O-

Unless perhaps, &c. This is merely as it were in triumph over the prediction, and as a circumstance too ridiculous to deserve attention. As soon as OEdipus is acquainted with the death of Polybus, his supposed father, he sides with Jocasta, and laughs at the oracle; the event, however, proved the folly of this contempt and impiety, and conveys at the same time this useful lesson to mankind, viz. that nothing is to be doubted, ridiculed, or called in question, that comes from heaven, how disputable soever it may appear in the eyes of men, who are unable to comprehend it. If the antient drama may be thought by some to fall short of the modern in some less important points, we must at least acknowledge it, with regard to morality infinitely superior to our own.

TYRANNUS.

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JOCASTA.

Henceforth, no more

Indulge them.

OEDIPUS.

But my mother's bed----that still

Must be avoided : I must fly from that.

JOCASTA.

Why shou'd man fear, whom chance, and chance alone

Doth ever rule ? Foreknowledge all is vain,

And can determine nothing ; therefore best

It is to live as fancy leads, at large,

Uncurb'd, and only subject to our will.

Fear not thy mother's bed : oft'times in dreams

Have men committed incest ; but his life

Will ever be most happy, who contemns

Such idle phantoms.

OEDIPUS.

Thou wert right, Jocasta,

Did not my mother live ; but as it is,

Spite of thy words, I must be anxious still.

O 2

J O.

Why shou'd man fear, &c. Jocasta had already treated the oracle of Apollo with contempt ; we are not therefore surprised at the impiety of this sentiment, which has been embraced by the despisers of religion from the earliest period of time to this day. When men are once persuaded that chance and not providence rules all things here below, they naturally conclude themselves at liberty to follow their own inclinations, without the least regard to the will of heaven, ' Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we dye.' The discovery of Jocasta's guilt, and her immediate punishment was apparently designed by Sophocles as a lesson to the free-thinkers of his age, and may afford no unprofitable admonition to those of our own.

JOCASTA.

Think on thy father's death, it is a light
To guide thee here.

OEDIPUS.

It is so; yet I fear

Whilst she survives him.

SHEPHERD.

Who is it you mean?

What woman fear you?

OEDIPUS.

Merope, the wife

Of Polybus.

SHEPHERD.

And wherefore fear you her?

OEDIPUS.

Know, stranger, a most dreadful oracle
Concerning her affrights me.

SHEPHERD.

May I know it,

Or must it be reveal'd to none but thee?

OEDIPUS.

O! no! I'll tell thee; Phœbus hath declar'd
That Oedipus shou'd stain his mother's bed,
And dip his hands in his own father's blood;
Wherefore I fled from Corinth, and liv'd here,
In happiness indeed; but still thou know'st
It is a blessing to behold our parents,
And that I had not.

SHEP-

It is a light, &c. The expression, in the original, is something singular, 'μεγας οφθαλμος δι πατρος ταφοι,' 'the tomb of thy father, is a great eye;' i. e. an eye by which thou may'st see how little oracles are to be confided in, which with regard to him have already proved false.

TYRANNUS.

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SHEPHERD.

Was it for this cause

Thou wert an exile then?

OEDIPUS.

It was; I fear'd

That I might one day prove my father's murth'rer.

SHEPHERD.

What if I come, O! king, to banish hence

Thy terrors, and restore thy peace.

OEDIPUS.

O! stranger,

Cou'dst thou do this, I wou'd reward thee nobly.

SHEPHERD.

Know then, for this I came; I came to serve,

And make thee happy.

OEDIPUS.

But I will not go

Back to my parents.

SHEPHERD.

Son, I see thou know'st not

What thou art doing.

OEDIPUS.

Wherefore think'st thou so?

By heav'n I beg thee then do thou instruct me.

O 3

SHEP-

Son, &c. Dacier observes on this passage, that the age and condition of the shepherd, who had saved OEdipus in his infancy, might intitule him to the use of this appellation; but remarks, at the same time, that such familiarity from a shepherd to a king, would not suit with French manners, nor the expression be admitted in the French tongue. Abhorrent however as it may be to a French ear, it is by no means disagreeable to an English one, as the frequent use of it in Shakespear and other writers sufficiently confirm.

S H E P H E R D.

If thou did'st fly from Corinth for this cause---

OE D I P U S.

Apollo's dire predictions still affright me.

S H E P H E R D.

Fear'st thou pollution from thy parents?

OE D I P U S.

That,

And that alone I dread.

S H E P H E R D.

Thy fears are vain,

OE D I P U S.

Not if they are my parents.

S H E P H E R D.

Polybus

Was not a-kin to thee.

OE D I P U S.

What say'st thou? Speak;

Say, was not Polybus my father?

S H E P H E R D.

No;

No more than he is mine.

OE D I-

If thou didst fly, &c. This is a continuation of the shepherd's last speech, who pursues his sentiment without regard to the intervening request of OEdipus.

Polybus was not a-kin, &c. One may easily conceive the powerful effect, which this first discovery must have had on the mind of OEdipus, and how finely and gradually it prepares the terrible and affecting catastrophe. Aristotle has with great truth therefore observed, that nothing could be better imagined than the circumstance before us.

See his Art of Poetry, chap. xi.

No more than he is mine. In the original, here follow two lines, which have either no meaning at all, or a very foolish one, and which I have therefore omitted in the translation.

TYRANNUS.

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OE D I P U S.

Why call me then

His son?

S H E P H E R D.

Because long since I gave thee to him;

He did receive thee from these hands.

OE D I P U S.

Indeed?

And cou'd he love another's child so well?

S H E P H E R D.

He had no children; that persuaded him

To take and keep thee.

OE D I P U S.

Did'st thou buy me then,

Or am I thine, and must I call thee father?

S H E P H E R D.

I found thee in Cithæron's woody vale.

OE D I P U S.

What brought thee there?

S H E P H E R D.

I came to feed my flocks

On the green mountain's side.

OE D I P U S.

It seems thou wert

A wand'ring shepherd.

S H E P H E R D.

Thy deliverer;

I sav'd thee from destruction.

OE D I P U S.

How! what then

Had happen'd to me?

S H E P H E R D.

Thy own feet will best

O 4

Inform

Inform thee of that circumstance.

OE D I P U S.

Alas !

Why call'st thou to remembrance a misfortune
Of so long date ?

S H E P H E R D.

'Twas I who loos'd the tendons
Of thy bored feet.

OE D I P U S.

It seems in infancy

I suffer'd much then.

S H E P H E R D.

To this incident

Thou ow'st thy name.

OE D I P U S.

My father, or my mother,

Who did it ? know'st thou ?

S H E P H E R D.

He, who gave thee to me,

Must tell thee that.

OE D I P U S.

Then from another's hand

Thou did'st receive me.

S H E P H E R D.

Ay, another shepherd.

OE D I-

Thou owest thy name. Οἰδῖπός, or OEdipus, signifies in the Greek, swell'd-foot, ' *ἵα το οἰστί τος ποδῶς*, ' *tumore nactus* ' *nomen ac vitio pedum*, ' (says Seneca) ' taking his name from the fore and swelling of his foot.' This remarkable circumstance, which so strongly confirms the shepherd's veracity, awakens the suspicions, and raises the curiosity of OEdipus, who proceeds from question to question, to a full conviction of his own guilt and misery.

OE D I P U S.

Who was he? Can'st thou recollect?

S H E P H E R D,

'Twas one,

At least so call'd, of Laius' family.

OE D I P U S.

Laius, who rul'd at Thebes?

S H E P H E R D.

The same; this man

Was shepherd to king Laius.

OE D I P U S.

Lives he still,

And cou'd I see him?

[pointing to chorus.

S H E P H E R D.

Some of these perhaps

His countrymen may give you information.

OE D I P U S.

[to the chorus.

O! speak, my friends, if any of you know

This shepherd; whether still he lives at Thebes

Or in some neighb'ring country; tell me quick,

For it concerns us near,

C H O R U S.

It must be he

Whom thou did'st lately send for; but the queen

Can best inform thee.

OE D I P U S.

Know'st thou, my Jocasta,

Whether the man whom thou did'st order hither,

And whom the shepherd speaks of, be the same?

JOCASTA.

Whom meant he? for I know not. OEdipus,
Think not so deeply of this thing.

OEDIPUS.

Good heav'n

Forbid, Jocasta, I shou'd now neglect
To clear my birth, when thus the path is mark'd
And open to me!

JOCASTA.

Do not, by the gods

I beg thee, do not, if thy life be dear,
Make farther search, for I have felt enough
Already from it.

OEDIPUS.

Rest thou satisfy'd;

Were I descended from a race of slaves,
'Twou'd not dishonour thee.

JOCASTA.

Yet hear me; do not,

Once more I beg thee, do not search this matter.

OEDIPUS.

Whom meant he? Jocasta, already but too well acquainted with the horrid truth, is reduced to a state of stupefaction: she pretends, when OEdipus addresses her, to be ignorant of all that has been said, and endeavours to dissuade him from all farther enquiry; her advice naturally increases that curiosity which it was meant to remove, and leads the unfortunate OEdipus to a discovery of the whole.

A race of slaves. The original is, 'εἰδ'αν ἐκ τριτῆς ἐγὼ μὴ-
' πρὸς πατρὶ τριδ'υλός,' 'not if I was thrice a slave from a third
' mother,' i. e. not if my mother, with her mother, and grand-
mother, for three generations back, had been slaves. This could
not be admitted in the translation.

OE D I P U S.

I will not be persuaded: I must search
And find it too.

J O C A S T A.

I know it best, and best

Advise thee.

OE D I P U S.

That advice perplexes more.

J O C A S T A.

O! wou'd to heav'n that thou may'st never know
Or who, or whence thou art!

OE D I P U S. [to the attendants.

Let some one fetch

That shepherd quick, and leave this woman here
To glory in her high descent.

J O C A S T A.

Alas!

Unhappy OEdipus! that word alone
I now can speak, remember 'tis my last

[Exit Jocasta.

SCENE

Remember 'tis my last. The silence and departure of Jocasta, on this occasion, are extremely judicious, and infinitely preferable to the rhetorical parade of lamentation put into her mouth by Seneca, Corneille and Dryden; nothing more could, indeed, be said by her with any degree of propriety: she was already convinced of her own and OEdipus's guilt, and in consequence of it had resolved to destroy herself; 'remember 'tis my last word;' this, we see, is purposely express'd in an ambiguous manner, and OEdipus does not perceive that she means never to speak to him again. Dacier remarks, that the conduct of Sophocles is truly admirable in this particular; for though it was absolutely necessary that Jocasta should be present at the unraveling of the plot, and discovery of OEdipus's birth, it was no longer so when the discovery was made, as their meeting

S C E N E IV.

OE D I P U S, C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

Why fled the queen in such disorder hence?
Sorely distress'd she seem'd, and much I fear
Her silence bodes some sad event.

OE D I P U S.

Whate'er

May come of that, I am resolv'd to know
The secret of my birth, how mean soever
It chance to prove; perhaps her sex's pride
May make her blush to find I was not born
Of noble parents; but I call myself
The son of fortune, my indulgent mother,
Whom I shall never be ashamed to own.

The

meeting afterwards would have been shocking and indecent: the truth of this observation may be justified by turning to Seneca, where the reader will see how that pompous writer has failed by leaving his master, and trusting to his own weaker genius.

The son of fortune. The antients called all those the sons of fortune, who not knowing their parents, or being of mean extraction, had raised themselves by merit to rank and dignity in the state. Horace speaking of himself, says

'*Luferat in campo fortunæ filius.*' Book 2. sat. 6.

The expression is luckily agreeable to our own idiom, and frequently made use of amongst us to convey exactly the same idea. What follows, when OEdipus considers himself as the offspring of time, and calls the months his brethren, is perhaps the *verbum ardens* of Tully, or what the French term, *idée trop hardie*; the situation, however, and circumstances of OEdipus at this time, may render it more excusable.

The kindred months that are like me, her children,
 The years that roll obedient to her will,
 Have rais'd me from the lowest state to pow'r
 And splendor ; wherefore, being what I am,
 I need not fear the knowledge of my birth

S C E N E V.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E.

If my prophetic soul doth well divine,
 E'er on thy brow to-morrow's sun shall shine,
 Cithæron, thou the myst'ry shalt unfold ;
 The doubtful OEdipus, no longer blind,
 Shall soon his country and his father find,
 And all the story of his birth be told ;

Then

If my prophetic soul, &c. OEdipus retreating with the shepherd of Corinth, in expectation of the old man, to supply the intermediate space of time, the chorus advances towards the middle of the theatre, probably near the altar of Apollo. As they are inclined throughout to judge favourably of their sovereign, they seem to wish, and almost to believe, that he may be found the son of some divinity. Dacier and Doctor Burton observe, that ' the strophe and antistrophe coming thus in the middle of the act, is something singular and uncommon, but that the chorus in this place do not sing but speak.' With all due deference to the opinion of these learned gentlemen, I cannot, for my own part, see any reason why the strophe and antistrophe should not be sung in this place as well as in any other; this is doubtless the fourth song or intermede of the chorus, but the arbitrary division into acts, for which, as I before observed, there is no foundation, had puzzled the commentators, and forced them to this expedient as the best method of solving the difficulty.

Then shall we in grateful lays
Celebrate our monarch's praise,
And in the sprightly dance our songs triumphant raise.

A N T I S T R O P H E.

What heav'nly pow'r gave birth to thee, O! king?
From Pan, the god of mountains, did'st thou spring

With some fair daughter of Apollo join'd;
Art thou from him who o'er Cyllene reigns,
Swift Hermes, sporting in Arcadia's plains?

Some Nymph of Helicon did Bacchus find,
Bacchus, who delights to rove
Through the forest, hill and grove,
And art thou, prince, the offspring of their love?

S C E N E VI.

OEDIPUS, CHORUS, SHEPHERD from CORINTH.

OE D I P U S.

If I may judge of one whom yet I ne'er
Had converse with, yon old man, whom I see
This way advancing, must be that same shepherd
We lately sent for, by his age and mein,
Ev'n as this stranger did describe him to us;
My servant's too are with him; but you best
Can say, for you must know him well.

C H O R U S.

'Tis he,
My lord, the faithful shepherd of king Laius.

OE D I.

If I may judge, &c. OEdipus returns with the shepherd of Corinth; as he comes on the stage, seeing the old shepherd with the attendants at a distance, and advancing towards him, he addresses the chorus.

OEDIPUS.

[To the shepherd from Corinth.
What say'st thou, stranger, is it he?

SHEPHERD.

It is.

SCENE VII.

OLD SHEPHERD, OEDIPUS, SHEPHERD from
CORINTH, CHORUS.

OEDIPUS.

Now answer me, old man, look this way, speak,
Didst thou belong to Laius?

OLD SHEPHERD.

Sir, I did,

No hireling slave, but in his palace bred,
I serv'd him long.

OEDIPUS.

What was thy bus'ness there?

OLD SHEPHERD.

For my life's better part I tended sheep.

OEDIPUS.

And whither didst thou lead them?

OLD SHEPHERD.

To Cithæron,

And to the neighb'ring plains.

OEDIPUS.

Behold this man,

[Pointing to the shepherd of Corinth.
Dost thou remember to have seen him?

OLD SHEPHERD.

Whom?

What hath he done?

OEDIPUS.

O E D I P U S.

Him, who now stands before thee,
Call'st thou to mind, or converse or connection
Between you in times past?

O L D S H E P H E R D.

I cannot say

I recollect it now.

S H E P H E R D of Corinth.

I do not wonder

He shou'd forget me, but I will recall
Some facts of antient date; he must remember
When on Cithæron we together fed
Our sev'ral flocks, in daily converse join'd
From spring to autumn, and when winter bleak
Approach'd, retir'd; I to my little cot
Convey'd my sheep, he to the palace led
His fleecy care; can'st thou remember this?

O L D S H E P H E R D.

I do, but that is long long since.

S H E P H E R D of Corinth.

It is,

But say, good shepherd, can'st thou call to mind
An infant, whom thou didst deliver to me,
Requesting me to breed him as my own?

O L D S H E P H E R D.

Ha! wherefore ask'st thou this!

S H E P H E R D of Corinth.

[Pointing to OEdipus.

Behold him here,

That very child.

O L D S H E P H E R D.

O! say it not, away,

Perdition on thee!

O E D I-

OEDIPUS.

Why reprove him thus?

Thou art thyself to blame, old man.

OLD SHEPHERD.

In what

Am I to blame, my lord?

OEDIPUS.

Thou wilt not speak

Touching this boy.

OLD SHEPHERD.

Alas! poor man, he knows not

What he hath said.

OEDIPUS.

If not by softer means

To be persuaded, force shall wring it from thee.

OLD SHEPHERD.

Treat not an old man harshly.

OEDIPUS. [to the attendants.

Bind his hands.

OLD SHEPHERD.

Wherefore, my lord? what wou'dst thou have me do?

OEDIPUS.

That child he talks of, didst thou give it to him?

OLD SHEPHERD.

I did, and wou'd to heav'n I then had dy'd!

OEDIPUS.

Die soon thou shalt, unless thou tell'st it all.

OLD SHEPHERD.

Say rather if I do.

OEDIPUS.

This fellow means

To trifle with us, by his dull delay.

O L D S H E P H E R D.

I do not; said I not I gave the child?

O E D I P U S.

Whence came the boy? was he thy own, or who
Did give him to thee?

O L D S H E P H E R D.

From another hand

I had receiv'd him.

O E D I P U S.

Say, what hand? from whom?

Whence came he?

O L D S H E P H E R D.

Do not, by the gods I beg thee,

Do not inquire.

O E D I P U S.

Force me to ask again,

And thou shalt die.

O L D S H E P H E R D.

In Laius's palace born-----

O E D I P U S.

Son of a slave, or of the king?

O L D S H E P H E R D.

Alas!

'Tis death for me to speak.

O E D I P U S.

And me to hear;

Yet say it.

O L D S H E P H E R D.

He was call'd the son of Laius;

But ask the queen, for she can best inform thee.

O E D I P U S.

Did she then give the child to thee?

O L D

TYRANNOUS.

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OLD SHEPHERD.

She did.

OE D I P U S.

For what?

OLD SHEPHERD.

To kill him.

OE D I P U S.

Kill her child ! inhuman

And barb'rous mother !

OLD SHEPHERD.

A dire oracle

Affrighted, and constrain'd her to it.

OE D I P U S.

Ha!

What oracle?

OLD SHEPHERD.

Which said, her son shou'd slay

His parents.

OE D I P U S.

Wherefore gav'st thou then the infant

To this old shepherd ?

OLD SHEPHERD.

Pity mov'd me to it:

I hop'd he wou'd have soon convey'd his charge

To some far distant country; he, alas !

Preserv'd him but for misery and woe;

For, O ! my lord, if thou indeed art he,

Thou art of all mankind the most unhappy.

OE D I P U S.

O ! me ! at length the mystery's unravel'd,

'Tis plain ; 'tis clear ; my fate is all determin'd :

Those are my parents who shou'd not have been

Ally'd to me : she is my wife, ev'n she

P 2

Whom

Whom nature had forbidden me to wed ;
 I have slain him who gave me life, and now
 Of thee, O ! light ! I take my last farewell ;
 For OEdipus shall ne'er behold thee more.

[Exeunt.

SCENE VIII.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

O ! hapless state of human race !
 How quick the fleeting shadows pass
 Of transitory bliss below,
 Where all is vanity and woe !
 By thy example taught, O ! prince, we see
 Man was not made for true felicity.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Thou, OEdipus, beyond the rest
 Of mortals wert supremely blest ;
 Whom ev'ry hand conspir'd to raise,
 Whom ev'ry hand rejoic'd to praise,
 When from the Sphynx thy all-preserving hand
 Stretch'd forth its aid to save a sinking land.

STRO-

O ! hapless state, &c. This is the fifth and last song or intermede of the chorus, who, convinced of OEdipus's guilt, lament the fate of their unhappy master in the most affecting manner ; drawing at the same time, from his example, some moral reflections on the instability of all human happiness, naturally resulting from the subject, and suitable to the occasion. In justice to Sophocles, it may here be observed, that the songs of the chorus throughout this play are not only in every point unexceptionable, but to the last degree beautiful and pathetic.

STROPHE II.

Thy virtues rais'd thee to a throne,
And grateful Thebes was all thy own;
Alas! how chang'd that glorious name!
Lost are thy virtues, and thy fame;
How cou'dst thou thus pollute thy father's bed?
How cou'dst thou thus thy hapless mother wed?

ANTISTROPHE II.

How cou'd that bed unconscious bear
So long the vile incestuous pair!
But time, of quick and piercing fight,
Hath brought the horrid deed to light;
At length Jocasta owns her guilty flame,
And finds a husband and a child the same.

EPODE.

Wretched son of Laius, thee
Henceforth may I never see,
But absent shed the pious tear,
And weep thy fate with grief sincere!
For thou didst raise our eyes to life and light,
To close them now in everlasting night.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MESSENGER.

SAGES of Thebes, most honour'd and rever'd,
 If e'er the house of Labdacus was dear
 And precious to you, what will be your grief
 When I shall tell the most disastrous tale
 You ever heard, and to your eyes present
 A spectacle more dreadful than they yet
 Did e'er behold ! not the wide Danube's waves
 Nor Phasis' stream can wash away the stains
 Of this polluted palace ; the dire crimes
 Long time conceal'd at length are brought to light ;
 But those, which spring from voluntary guilt,
 Are still more dreadful.

CHOR.

Not the wide Danube's waves, &c. Ithier, or the Danube, is one of the most considerable rivers in Europe, which passing by Illyricum runs into the Euxine sea. Phasis was a famous river in Colchis.

The antients imagined that water, and particularly that of fresh or living springs, could cleanse the mind as well as body from pollution ; a piece of superstition which seems to have been adopted by the followers of Mahomet, whose frequent washings constitute no inconsiderable part of their religious duty. This calls to mind a similar passage in our English Sophocles, where lady Macbeth, after the murder of Duncan, comes out rubbing her hands, ' out, ' damn'd spot, out I say ; will these hands never be white ?----all ' the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.'

Shakespear's Macbeth.

Voluntary guilt. Alluding to the actions of Oedipus ; the murder

ther

CHORUS.

Nothing can be worse
Than what we know already; bring'st thou more
Misfortunes to us?

MESSENGER.

To be brief, the queen,
Divine Jocaſta's dead.

CHORUS.

Jocaſta dead! ſay, by what hand?

MESSENGER.

Her own;
And what's more dreadful, no one ſaw the deed.
What I myſelf beheld you all ſhall hear.
Enſlam'd with rage, ſoon as ſhe reach'd the palace,
Inſtant retiring to the nuptial bed,
She ſhut the door, then rav'd and tore her hair,
Call'd out on Laius dead, and bade him think
On that unhappy ſon who murder'd him,
And ſtain'd his bed; then turning her ſad eyes
Upon the guilty couch, ſhe curs'd the place
Where ſhe had borne a huſband from her huſband,
And children from her child; what follow'd then
I know not, by the cries of OEdipus
Prevented, for on him our eyes were fix'd
Attentive; forth he came, beſeeching us
To lend him ſome ſharp weapon, and inform him

P 4

Where

ther and inceſt committed by him were involuntary crimes; but his
anger, impatience, contempt of the gods, and putting out his own
eyes, were voluntary, and therefore, as Sophocles obſerves, more
dreadful: doubtleſs no misfortunes are ſo bitter and inſupportable
as thoſe which we bring on ourſelves by our own follies.

Some ſharp weapon. OEdipus, in deſpair, deſires them to lend
him a ſword, or any weapon to deſtroy himſelf. Dacier obſerves
on

Where he might find his mother and his wife,
 His children's wretched mother, and his own;
 Some ill-designing pow'r did then direct him
 (For we were silent) to the queen's apartment,
 Forcing the bolt, he rush'd into the bed,
 And found Jocasta, where we all beheld her,
 Entangled in the fatal noose, which soon
 As he perceiv'd, loosing the pendent rope,
 Deeply he groan'd, and casting on the ground
 His wretched body, shew'd a piteous sight
 To the beholders, on a sudden thence
 Starting, he pluck'd from off the robe she wore
 A golden buckle that adorn'd her side,
 And bury'd in his eyes the sharpen'd point,
 Crying, he ne'er again wou'd look on her,
 Never wou'd see his crimes or mis'ries more,
 Or those whom guiltless he cou'd ne'er behold,

Or

on this passage, that it is plain, from hence, that the antients wore no swords except in war, and laughs at Seneca for giving one to OEdipus.

Some ill designing power. 'Τίς Δαίμων,' 'some dæmon.' Bru-moy translates it 'quelque noiré divinité.' The antients generally attributed evils and misfortunes to some unknown malevolent power.

Loosing the pendent rope. Hanging, though a death much in fashion amongst the antients, being at present so much out of vogue, and entirely banished from our stage, since the introduction of sword and poison; it is perhaps difficult for a translator to render this passage closely, without offence to the delicacy of modern ears. My readers must, however, excuse the common and vulgar expressions, as I could not alter the manner of Jocasta's death, without an unpardonable deviation from the original.

Or those whom guiltless, &c. Meaning his children, whom he could not look on without the terrible recollection of his own guilt,

Or those to whom he now must sue for aid ;
His lifted eye-lids then, repeating still
These dreadful plaints, he tore ; whilst down his cheek
Fell show'rs of blood : such fate the wretched pair
Sustain'd, partakers in calamity,
Fall'n from a state of happiness (for none
Were happier once than they) to groans, and death,
Reproach and shame, and ev'ry human woe.

CHORUS.

And where is now the poor unhappy man ?

MESSENGER.

Open the doors, he cries, and let all Thebes
Behold his parents murth'rer, adding words
Not to be utter'd ; banish'd now, he says,
He must be, nor, devoted as he is
By his own curse, remain in this sad place :
He wants a kind conductor and a friend
To help him now, for 'tis too much to bear,
But you will see him soon, for lo ! the doors
Are open'd, and you will behold a sight
That wou'd to pity move his deadliest foe.

SCENE II.

OEDIPUS, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

O ! horrid sight ! more dreadful spectacle

Than

Or those to whom, &c. Meaning either his children, or Creon,
to whom he applies in the last scene.

O ! horrid sight ! Here, we must suppose, the back scene opens,
and discovers OEdipus blind, and in the most miserable condition,
advancing slowly towards the front of the stage ; the chorus shock'd

at

Than e'er these eyes beheld! what madness urg'd thee
 To this sad deed? what pow'r malignant heap'd
 On thy poor head such complicated woe?
 Unhappy man! alas! I wou'd have held
 Some converse with thee, but thy looks affright me;
 I cannot bear to speak to thee.

OEDIPUS.

O! me!

Where am I? and whence comes the voice I hear?
 Where art thou, fortune?

CHORUS.

Chang'd to misery,
 Dreadful to hear, and dreadful to behold.

OEDIPUS.

O! cruel darkness! endless, hopeless night,
 Shame, terrors, and unutterable woe!
 More painful is the mem'ry of my crimes
 Than all the wounds my wild distraction made.

CHORUS.

Thus doubly curs'd, O! prince, I wonder not
 At thy affliction.

OEDIPUS.

Art thou here, my friend?

I know

at so moving a spectacle, turn their eyes from him: the appearance of OEdipus in this place, was indeed extremely hazardous, as it would have been difficult for a writer of less abilities than Sophocles to make him speak with propriety, and say neither more nor less than he ought. Let the reader compare this simple and pathetic scene with the bombast of the turgid Seneca, who is, to the last degree tedious, in his awkward imitation of it.

Complicated woe. Dacier calls it, 'a deluge of misfortunes.' In the original it is, 'evils greater than the greatest evils,' which, how beautiful soever it may be in Greek, would not admit of a literal translation.

I know thy voice; thou wou'dst not leave the wretched;
Thou art my faithful, kind assistant still.

CHORUS.

How cou'dst thou thus deprive thyself of sight!
What madness drove thee to the desp'rate deed?
What god inspir'd?

OEDIPUS.

Apollo was the cause;
He was, my friends, the cause of all my woes;
But for these eyes, myself did quench their light?
I want not them; what use were they to me,
But to discover scenes of endless woe.

CHORUS.

'Tis but too true.

OEDIPUS.

What pleasure now remains
For OEdipus? he cannot joy in aught
To sight or ear delightful. Curse on him,
Whoe'er he was, that loosen'd my bound feet,
And sav'd me, in Cithæron's vale, from death!
I owe him nothing: had I perish'd then,
Much happier had it been for you, my friends,
And for myself.

CHORUS.

I too cou'd wish thou had'st.

OEDIPUS.

I shou'd not then have murder'd Laius; then
I had not ta'en Jocasta to my bed;
But now I am a guilty wretch, the son
Of a polluted mother, father now

To

Apollo was the cause. By delivering the oracle, which foretold that OEdipus should kill his father, and afterwards pronouncing the dreadful sentence against the murderer.

To my own brothers, all that's horrible
To nature is the lot of OEdipus.

C H O R U S

Yet must I blame this cruel act, for sure
The loss of sight is worse than death itself.

OE D I P U S .

I care not for thy counsel, or thy praise ;
For with what eyes cou'd I have e'er beheld
My honour'd father in the shades below,
Or my unhappy mother, both destroy'd
By me ? this punishment is worse than death,
And so it shou'd be : sweet had been the sight
Of my dear children, them I cou'd have wish'd
To gaze upon ; but I must never see
Or them, or this fair city, or the palace
Where I was born ; depriv'd of ev'ry bliss
By my own lips, which doom'd to banishment
The murderer of Laius, and expell'd
The impious wretch, by gods and men accus'd :
Cou'd I behold them after this ? O ! no !
Wou'd I cou'd now with equal ease remove
My hearing too, be deaf as well as blind,
And from another entrance shut out woe !
To want our senses, in the hour of ill,
Is comfort to the wretched. O ! Cithæron,
Why didst thou e'er receive me, or receiv'd,
Why not destroy, that men might never know
Who gave me birth ? O ! Polybus, O ! Corinth,

And

In the shades below. It appears from this passage that the Greeks imagined the body after death would remain exactly in the same state as before. OEdipus believed that his blindness would continue when he was removed to the shades below. The same opinion, we know, prevailed with regard to the mind also.

And thou, long time believ'd, my father's palace,
O! what a foul disgrace to human nature
Didst thou receive beneath a prince's form!
Impious myself, and from an impious race.
Where is my splendor now? O! Daulian path,
The shady forest, and the narrow pass
Where three ways meet, who drank a father's blood,
Shed by these hands; do you not still remember
The horrid deed, and what, when here I came,
Follow'd more dreadful? fatal nuptials, you
Produc'd me, you return'd me to the womb
That bare me; thence relations horrible
Of fathers, sons and brothers came; of wives,
Sisters and mothers, sad alliance! all
That man holds impious and detestable.
But what in act is vile, the modest tongue
Shou'd never name: bury me, hide me, friends,

From

My father's palace. That is, the palace of Polybus, king of Corinth, the supposed father of OEdipus, who brought him up as his own, and educated him accordingly.

Fatal nuptials, &c. 'Plurals, (says Longinus in the 19th chapter of his treatise on the sublime) impart a greater magnificence to the stile, and by the copiousness of number, give it more emphasis and grace; so the words of OEdipus in Sophocles.' [Here follows the passage] 'all these terms (continues the great critic) denote on the one side OEdipus only, and on the other Jocasta; but the number, thrown into the plural, seems to multiply the misfortunes of that unfortunate pair, and excite greater and more elevated ideas.'

See Smyth's excellent translation of Longinus, p. 61.

But what in act, &c. OEdipus is going on, but stops short, as if shocked at the bare repetition of his crime, which produces this moral reflection; the sentiment is adopted by Publius Syrus,

'Quod facere turpe est; dicere ne honestum puta.'

From ev'ry eye ; destroy me, cast me forth
 To the wide ocean, let me perish there ;
 Do any thing to shake off hated life ;
 Seize me, approach, my friends, you need not fear,
 Polluted tho' I am to touch me ; none
 Shall suffer for my crimes but I alone.

C H O R U S.

In most fit time, my lord, the noble Creon
 This way advances ; he can best determine
 And best advise ; sole guardian now of Thebes,
 To him thy pow'r devolves.

OE D I P U S.

What shall I say ;

Can I apply to him for aid, whom late
 I deeply injur'd by unjust suspicion ?

S C E N E III.

CREON, OEDIPUS, CHORUS.

CREON.

I come not, prince, to triumph o'er thy woes
 With vile reproach ; I pity thy misfortunes ;
 But, O ! my Thebans, if you do not fear
 The censure of your fellow-citizens,
 At least respect the all-creating eye
 Of Phœbus, who beholds you thus exposing
 To public view a wretch accurs'd, polluted,

Whom

You need not fear. Alluding to a superstitious notion amongst the
 ancients, that it was dangerous even to touch an accursed person,
 or one seemingly visited with misfortunes by the gods. In the OE-
 dipus Coloneus, we find this religious fear still more strongly im-
 press'd on the minds of all that come near that unfortunate exile.

Whom neither earth can bear, nor sun behold,
Nor holy show'r besprinkle: take him hence,
Within the palace; those, who are by blood
United, shou'd alone be witnesses
Of such calamity.

OE D I P U S.

O! Creon, thou,
The best of men, and I the worst; how kind
Thou art to visit me! O! by the gods
Let me entreat thee, since beyond my hopes
Thou art so good, now hear me; what I ask
Concerns thee most.

C R E O N.

What is it thou desir'st
Thus ardently?

OE D I P U S.

I beg thee, banish me
From Thebes this moment, to some land remote,
Where I may ne'er converse with man again.

C R E O N.

Myself long since had done it, but the gods

Must

Holy shower. This refers to the curse pronounced by OEdipus himself on the murderer of Laius, in the first scene of the second act. It was customary (as is observed in a note on the passage) for the priests to sprinkle water on those who assisted at the sacrifice, and sometimes, probably, in such abundance as might properly be called 'a shower;' this custom of purification we find practised in other places as well as Greece, and alluded to in scripture: 'then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness,' Ezek xxxvi. v. 25. 'Let us draw near (says the author of the epistle to the Hebrews) having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water,' Heb. x. v. 22.

Must be consulted first.

OEDIPUS.

Their will is known

Already, and their oracle declar'd

The guilty parricide shou'd die.

CREON.

It hath;

But, as it is, 'twere better to enquire

What must be done.

OEDIPUS.

For such a wretch as me

Wou'dst thou again explore the will of heav'n?

CREON.

Thy hapless fate shou'd teach us to believe,

And reverence the gods.

OEDIPUS.

Now, Creon, list;

I beg thee, I conjure thee, let a tomb

Be rais'd, and all due honours paid to her

Who lies within; she was thy sister, Creon;

It is a duty which thou ow'st: for me,

I cannot hope this city now will deign

To keep me here; O! Creon, let me go,

And seek the solitary mountain's top,

My own Cithæron, by my parents doom'd

Long

The gods must be consulted. As Creon was next heir to the crown of Thebes, if he had, on the conviction of Oedipus's guilt, immediately put in execution the sentence against him without farther consultation of the oracle, it might have been attributed to his impatient desire of succeeding to the kingdom: this would in some measure have stained the purity of his character, which Sophocles has represented as blameless and unspotted throughout this whole drama, though he has taken the liberty to change it in another.

Long since to be the grave of OEdipus;
 There wou'd I die, as they decreed I shou'd:
 Alas! I cannot, must not perish yet,
 Till I have suffer'd evils worse than death,
 For I was only sav'd to be unhappy:
 But I must meet my fate, whate'er it be.
 My sons are men, and wheresoever fortune
 May place them, cannot want the means of life;
 They shall not burthen thee; but, O! my friend,
 What will become of my unhappy daughters,
 With tend'rest love, beneath a father's hand,
 Cherish'd so long? O take them to thy care,
 Thou best of men! O! might I but embrace them,
 But shed a tear o'er their disastrous fate,
 Might I be suffer'd but to touch them here,
 I shou'd rejoice, and think I saw them still.
 But hark! methinks even now I hear the voice
 Of my dear daughters; hath the gracious Creon,
 In pity to my woes, already brought
 My children to me; is it so?

CREON.

It is:

Thy wishes are prevented; they are here.

SCENE IV.

DAUGHTERS of OEDIPUS, OEDIPUS, CREON,
 CHORUS.

OEDIPUS.

May heav'n reward thee for this goodness to me,
 And give thee much more bliss than I have known!

VOL. II.

Q

Now,

Now, my dear children, come towards me, come
 Towards your father and your---brother; see
 These sightless eyes, pierc'd by my own mad hands;
 Behold that wretched father who begat you
 Unknowingly on her who gave me birth;
 I cannot see you now, I can but weep
 Your fate, to think what hours of wretchedness
 You have to know hereafter: whither now
 Must my poor children fly? from ev'ry feast
 Joyless with grief and shame shall you return;
 And when the time shall come, when ripen years
 Shou'd give you to the nuptial bed, who then,
 Careless of fame, will let his child partake
 The infamy of my abhorred race,
 Sprang from a wretch accurs'd, who kill'd his father,
 And from the womb that bare him did beget
 You my unhappy daughters? such reproach
 Must still be yours, to virgin solitude
 Devoted ever, and a barren bed.
 Son of Menœceus, thou alone art left
 Their father now, for O! Jocasta's dead,
 And I am----nothing; do not then forsake
 Thy kindred; nor, deserted and forlorn,
 Suffer them still, in penury and woe,
 To wander helpless, in their tender age:
 Remember, they have no support but thee.

O!

Now, my dear children, &c. The passions of terror and pity were never more effectually or more judiciously raised than in this tragedy: that horror which the spectators must feel at the crimes of Oedipus, is finely contrasted by this pathetic address to his daughters, which excites the warmest compassion for his misfortunes, and creates in the mind of the audience that piety and submission to the will of the gods, which the whole drama is visibly designed to inculcate.

O! gen'rous prince, have pity on them, give me
Thy friendly hand in promise of thy aid.
To you, my daughters, had your early years
Permitted, I had giv'n my last advice :
Too young for counsel, all I ask of you
Is but to pray the gods that my sad life
May not be long, but yours, my children, crown'd
With many days, and happier far than mine.

CREON.

It is enough ; go in, thy grief transports thee
Beyond all bounds.

OE D I P U S.

'Tis hard, but I submit.

CREON.

The time demands it, therefore go.

OE D I P U S.

O! Creon,

Know'st thou what now I wish ?

CREON.

What is it ? speak.

OE D I P U S.

That I may quit this fatal place.

CREON.

Thou ask'st

What heav'n alone can grant.

OE D I P U S.

Alas ! to heav'n

I am most hateful.

CREON.

Yet shalt thou obtain

What thou desir'st.

OE D I P U S.

Shall I indeed ?

Q²

CREON.

CREON.

Thou shalt;

I never say aught that I do not mean.

O E D I P U S.

Then let me go; may I depart?

CREON.

Thou may'st;

But leave thy children,

O E D I P U S.

Do not take them from me.

CREON.

Thou must not always have thy will; already
Thou'st suffer'd for it.

C H O R U S.

Thebans, now behold

The great, the mighty OEdipus, who once

The

Leave thy children. Dacier judiciously observes on this passage, that every thing dreadful was to be feared from the violent temper and unfortunate condition of OEdipus. Creon was probably apprehensive, that in the height of despair he might destroy his children; he prudently, therefore, keeps them from him. To which remark it may be added, that OEdipus had just before delivered his daughters to the care of Creon, who had consequently a right to dispose of them as he thought proper. Mr. Boivin finds fault with the behaviour of Creon on this occasion; he makes no scruple of condemning the two last scenes as spurious, calls the speech of OEdipus to his daughters, 'lamentation indigne d'un grand personnage,' and accuses him of 'une bizarre changement d'humeur & de caractère.' He makes, at the same time, several other severe, but ill-founded reflections, on the conduct of the drama, which seem to have arisen partly from his ignorance of Grecian manners, and partly from misunderstanding the sense of the original; mistakes, which it were easy to point out; but I refer my reader to the criticism itself, which they will find in the 9th vol. of the *Histoire de l'Academie des inscriptions*, &c. 4to, p. 372.

The Sphynx's dark ænigma cou'd unfold;
 Who less to fortune than to wisdom ow'd;
 In virtue as in rank to all superior,
 Yet fall'n at last to deepest misery.
 Let mortals hence be taught to look beyond
 The present time, nor dare to say, a man
 Is happy, till the last decisive hour
 Shall close his life without the taste of woe.

Q 3

Let mortals hence, &c. This sentiment is originally attributed to the wise law-giver Solon, and said to have been spoken by him to Cræsus. Ovid has turned it thus,

-----ultima semper

Exspectanda dies homini, dicique beatus

Ante obitum nemo, supremaque funera debet.

Mr. Boivin positively asserts, that these lines do not belong to Sophocles, but were foisted in by some transcriber: he calls them 'une moralité fade, usée, & triviale, un lieu commun, qui vient indifféremment à la plupart des sujets tragiques,' 'a piece of insipid, trite and trivial morality, a common place, suited equally to almost any tragedy.' In spite of this severe censure, I cannot but be of opinion, that the moral is here introduced with the utmost propriety, and though it may indeed be applied to other subjects, seems peculiarly adapted to this, as it could never be better exemplified and illustrated, than by the story of OEdipus in the preceding drama; a performance which reflects the highest honour on its author, being perhaps, considered in every light, his most finished work, and the chef-d'œuvre of antiquity.

Dramatis Personae.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

ANTIGONE.

POLYARCHUS, Son of Oedipus.

OE D I P U S
AS A THEBAN.

M. S. U M E N O L O

ATTENDANTS OR GROOMS, THIEVES AND HINNERS.

Composed of Ancient Man of Thebes.

SCENE II.

A Grove, at the entrance to the temple of the Furies.

Dramatis Personæ.

OEDIPUS.

CREON.

ANTIGONE,

ISMENE,

} Daughters of OEdipus.

POLYNICES, Son of OEdipus.

THESEUS, King of Athens.

An ATHENIAN.

MESSENGER.

ATTENDANTS on Creon, Theseus and Ismene.

~~XXXXXXXX~~ CHORUS, ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

Composed of ANTIENT MEN of Thebes.

SCENE

A grove, at the entrance to the temple of the Furies.

OE D I P U S
C O L O N E U S.

A C T I.

S C E N E I.

OEDIPUS, ANTIGONE.

OEDIPUS.

WHERE are we now, my dear Antigone?
Know'st thou the place? Will any here afford
Their scanty alms to a poor wanderer,

The

Where are we now, &c. This tragedy is a continuation of the history of OEdipus, who, condemned to perpetual banishment, is supposed to have wandered from city to city, and to arrive at last, conducted by his daughter Antigone, at Colonus, a little hill, not far from Athens, where was a temple and grove sacred to the furies, or, as they are styled, the venerable goddesses. The subject is extremely simple, containing little more than a narration of the principal and most remarkable circumstances attending the death of OEdipus. To taste the beauties of this piece, it is absolutely necessary that the reader have an eye throughout both to the political and religious state of Greece, and the time of its appearance on the stage. Valerius Maximus informs us that Sophocles wrote it when he was near a hundred years of age, and prefers it, for what reason I know not, to all his tragedies. Cicero also, who was a much more competent judge, seems to have been highly pleased with it, and has left us the following remarkable anecdote concerning it,
viz.

The banish'd OEdipus? I ask not much,
 Yet less receive; but I am satisfy'd:
 Long time hath made my woes familiar to me,
 And I have learn'd to bear calamity.
 But tell me, daughter, if thou see'st a place
 Or sacred, or profane, where I may rest,
 There set me down, from some inhabitant
 A chance but we may learn where now we are,
 And act, so strangers ought, as he directs us.

ANTIGONE.

O! OEdipus, my poor unhappy father,
 Far as my eyes can reach, I see a city,
 With lofty turrets crown'd, and, if I err not,
 This place is sacred, by the laurel shade
 Olive and vine thick-planted, and the songs
 Of nightingales sweet-warbling thro' the grove;
 Here set thee down, and rest thy weary'd limbs
 On this rude stone; 'tis a long way for age
 Like thine to travel.

OEDIPUS.

viz. That Sophocles wrote tragedies even in extreme old age; bestowing so much attention on them as totally to neglect every thing else; insomuch that his sons summoned him before the judges as an idiot and dotard, utterly incapable of acting for himself; and requesting, that the administration of his affairs might be taken from him, and put into their hands: the old man appeared in court to defend himself against the accusation, and producing the tragedy of OEdipus Coloneus, which he had just then finished, asked the judges if that appeared to be the work of an idiot. The piece was read, and applauded, the sons petition rejected with derision, and Sophocles acquitted with honour. We know not what authority Tully had for this story; it may not, however be amiss to observe, that the bitter accusations against his sons, which the poet hath put into the mouth of OEdipus, seem to confirm the truth of it.

OEDIPUS.

Place me here, and guard

A fightless wretch.

ANTIGONE.

Alas! at such a time

Thou need'st not tell Antigone her duty.

OEDIPUS.

Know'st thou not where we are?

ANTIGONE.

As I have learn'd

From passing travellers, not far from Athens;

The place I know not; wou'd you that I go

And strait enquire? but now I need not leave thee,

For, lo! a stranger comes this way, ev'n now

He stands before you, he will soon inform us,

SCENE II.

An ATHENIAN, OEDIPUS, ANTIGONE.

OEDIPUS.

Stranger, thou com'st in happy hour to tell us

What much we wish to know; let me then ask thee---

ATHENIAN.

Ask nothing; speak not till thou art remov'd

From off that hallow'd spot, where now thou stand'st,

By human footsteps not to be profan'd.

OEDIPUS.

Speak not, &c. Amongst the antients not only the temples and altars of their deities, but also the groves, forests and vineyards adjoining to them were esteemed sacred: insomuch that it was held impious and unlawful for any but the priests to enter into them: the Athenian stranger, therefore will not converse with Oedipus till he is removed from that forbidden spot, where he had placed himself, into the public path.

OEDIPUS

To whom then is it sacred?

ATHENIAN.

'Tis a place.

Where but to tread is impious, and to dwell
Forbidden; where the dreadful goddesses,
Daughters of earth and night, alone inhabit.

OEDIPUS.

Ha! let me hear their venerable names.

ATHENIAN.

By other names in other climes ador'd,
The natives here call them Eumenides,
Th' all-seeing pow'rs.

OEDIPUS.

O! that they wou'd but smile

Propitious, and receive a suppliant's pray'r,
That I might never leave this blest abode!

ATHENIAN.

What dost thou mean?

OEDIPUS.

It suits my sorrows well.

ATHENIAN.

I must inform the citizens; till then

Remain.

OEDIPUS.

The dreadful goddesses. These dreadful, or venerable goddesses, were the three furies, Alecto, Megæra, and Tisiphone; daughters, as Sophocles tells us, of earth and night; or, according to other poetical genealogists, of Nox and Acheron, supposed to be the avengers of impiety; as such altars and temples were erected to them. Those, who are inclined to allegorise the pagan mythology, easily transform them into the stings of conscience, which tormented Oedipus.

OEDIPUS.

O! do not scorn a wretched exile,
But tell me, stranger.---

ATHENIAN.

Speak; I scorn thee not.

OEDIPUS.

What place is this?

ATHENIAN.

I'll tell thee what I know.

This place is sacred all: great Neptune here
Presides, and he who bears the living fire,
Titan Prometheus; where thou tread'st, is call'd
The brazen way, the bulwark of our state:
From this equestrian hill, their safest guard,
The neighb'ring villagers their gen'ral name
Derive, thence call'd Colonians all.

OEDIPUS.

Great Neptune, &c. Neptune is reported by the poets to have struck the earth with his trident, which immediately produced a horse: in allusion to this, Colonus, where he was worshipped, is called the Equestrian hill.

Titan Prometheus. Prometheus, according to the tales of the heathens concerning him, was supposed to have stolen fire from heaven, and with it to have made men, or, according to the satirical Lucian, which was more criminal, women; for which impiety he was punished by the gods in the same manner as the rebellious Titans: he is therefore called in this place Titan Prometheus.

The brazen way. Near this brazen way was supposed to be the passage to Hades, or the shades, by which Pluto conveyed the ravished Proserpine to his dominions. Some imagined it was so called from the brazen mines abounding in that neighbourhood: it was most probably a kind of bridge, or narrow pass for travellers, and lay between the two parts of the sacred grove, from which the Athenian stranger calls to Oedipus.

OE D I P U S.

But say,
Are there, who dwell here then?

A T H E N I A N.

There are, and call'd
From him they worship.

OE D I P U S.

Is the pow'r supreme
Lodg'd in the people's voice, or in the king?

A T H E N I A N.

'Tis in the king.

OE D I P U S.

Who is he?

A T H E N I A N.

Theseus, son
Of Ægeus, their last sov'reign.

OE D I P U S.

Who will go,
And tell him----

A T H E N I A N.

What, to come and meet thee here?

OE D I P U S.

To tell him that a little help bestow'd
Wou'd amply be repay'd.

A T H E N I A N.

Why, what cou'dst thou do,
Dark as thou art?

OE D I P U S.

My words will not be so.

A T H E N I A N.

Then mark me, that thou err not; for to me
Thy fortune seems ill-suited to thy nature,
Which is most noble; therefore stay thou here

Till

Till I return, I will not go to Athens,
But ask these villagers, who sojourn here,
If thou may'st stay.

[Exit Athenian.]

S C E N E III.

OEDIPUS, ANTIGONE.

OEDIPUS.

My daughter, is he gone?

ANTIGONE.

He is, and thou may'st safely speak, for I
Alone am with thee.

OEDIPUS.

Goddeses rever'd!

Since in your seats my weary'd steps have found
Their first repose, not inauspicious smile
On Phœbus and on me! for know, the god
Who 'gainst unhappy OEdipus denounc'd
Unnumber'd woes, foretold that here at last

I shou'd

Goddeses rever'd, &c. One would not imagine that this play, from the apparent simplicity and barrenness of the fable, which promises no more than an account of the death of a poor old man in an obscure corner of the earth, could possibly produce any incidents that would please or instruct; Sophocles has, notwithstanding, so contrived as to make the business of this play extremely interesting to an Athenian audience. OEdipus, as soon as he is informed where he is, addresses himself in the most solemn manner to the deities of the place, recollecting an oracle which since his banishment has declared to him, that this spot would put a period to all his woes. We shall perceive that the hero of the drama becomes every moment of more and more consequence, and that no less than the safety and prosperity of a whole kingdom depends on this seemingly accidental and insignificant circumstance.

I shou'd have rest, within this hallow'd grove
 These hospitable shades, and finish here
 A life of mis'ry: happy those, he said,
 Who shou'd receive me, glorious their reward,
 And woe to them who strove to drive me hence
 Inhuman; this he promis'd to confirm
 By signs undoubted; thunder, or the sound
 Of dreadful earthquake, or the light'ning's blast
 Launch'd from the arm of Jove; I doubt it not,
 From you some happy omen hither led
 My prosp'rous steps, that first to you I came
 Pure to the pure; and here on this rude seat
 Repos'd me, cou'd not be the work of chance;
 Wherefore, ye pow'rs! as Phœbus hath decreed,
 Here let me find a period of my woes!
 Here end my wretched life! unless the man,
 Who long hath groan'd beneath the bitt'rest ills
 That mortals feel, still seem to merit more.
 Daughters of Antient Night! O! hear me now!
 And thou, from great Minerva call'd, the best
 And noblest city, Athens! pity me;
 Pity the shadow of poor OEdipus!
 For, O! I am not what I was.

A N T I G O N E.

No more:

Behold a venerable band approach
 Of antient natives, come perchance to seek thee.

OE D I P U S.

I've done; Antigone, remove me hence,

And

Pure to the pure. In the original it is 'sober to the sober,' alluding to the sacrifices offered to the furies, in which wine was never used; because, says doctor Potter, the divine justice ought always to be chaste, sober and vigilant.

And hide me in the grove, till by their words,
 List'ning I learn their purpose; such foreknowledge
 Will best direct us how to act hereafter.

[Exeunt.

SCENE IV.

CHORUS.

Where is he? look, examine, search around
 For this abandon'd exile, of mankind
 The most profane, doubtless some wretched stranger;
 Who else had dar'd on this forbidden soil
 To tread? where dwell the dreadful deities
 We tremble ev'n to name, and as we pass
 Dare not behold; but silently revere,
 Or soft with words of fairest omen greet.
 Of these regardless here we come to find
 An impious wretch; I look around the grove,
 But still he lurks unseen.

VOL. II.

R

SCENE

Where is he? This is the first appearance of the chorus, who being acquainted by the Athenian traveller, that there was a man in the sacred grove, alarmed at such presumption and impiety, enter in search of OEdipus, who had retired with Antigone to the inner part of the wood. In this, and the following scene, the reader must enter into, and make allowance for the follies of pagan superstition.

S C E N E V.

OEDIPUS, ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

O E D I P U S.

Behold me here;

For by your words I find you look for me.

[looking stedfastly at him.]

C H O R U S.

Dreadful his voice, and terrible his aspect!

O E D I P U S.

I am no outlaw; do not look thus on me.

C H O R U S.

Jove the defender! who is this old man?

O E D I P U S.

One on whom fortune little hath bestow'd
 To call for rev'rence from you; that, alas!
 Is but too plain; thus by another's eyes
 Conducted here, and on her aid depending,
 Old as I am.

C H O R U S.

Alas! and wert thou born

Thus fightless? full of sorrow and of years

Indeed thou seem'st; but do not let on us

Thy curse devolve; thou hast transgress'd the bounds

Prescrib'd

Behold me here. OEdipus and Antigone, overhearing the words of the chorus, and apprehensive of being soon discovered by them, leave their retreat, and re-enter the stage.

No out-law. The word out-law, though not very poetical, seems the best which our language can afford to express the precise meaning of ' *απομωος* ;' one whom the laws of his country had expelled from all the benefits and privileges of society.

Prescrib'd to mortals; shun this hallow'd grove,
 Where on the grassy surface, to the pow'rs
 A welcome offering, flows with honey mix'd
 The limpid stream; unhappy stranger, hence,
 Away, begone: thou see'st 'tis a long space
 Divides us: dost thou hear me, wretched exile?
 This instant, if thou dost, depart, then speak,
 But not before.

OE D I P U S.

Antigone, my daughter,
 What's to be done?

A N T I G O N E.

Obeys the citizens;
 Give me thy hand.

OE D I P U S.

I will; and now, my friends,
 Confiding thus in you, and thus removing
 As you directed, let me not be injur'd.

C H O R U S.

Thou shalt not; be assur'd that thou art safe;
 None shall offend or drive thee hence.

OE D I P U S.

Yet more

Must I approach?

C H O R U S.

A little farther still.

R 2

OE D I-

And now my friends, &c. Here we must suppose, that OEdipus, with the assistance of his daughter, moves a little way from the place where he first stood; but the chorus, perceiving that he is still on part of the holy ground, will not converse with him till he is entirely removed to a stone at the extremity of it, which probably lay in the public road.

OE D I P U S

OE D I P U S.

Will this suffice?

C H O R U S.

Remove him this way, virgin;

Thou hear'st us.

A N T I G O N E.

Thou must follow me, my father,

Weak as thou art; we are unhappy strangers,

And must submit; what e'er the city hates

Content to hate, and what she loves to love.

OE D I P U S.

Lead me, my daughter, to some hallow'd spot

For mutual converse fit, nor let us strive

With dire necessity.

C H O R U S.

Stop there, nor move

Beyond that stone.

OE D I P U S.

Thus then?

C H O R U S.

It is enough.

OE D I P U S.

Where shou'd I sit?

C H O R U S.

A little forward lean,

And rest thee there.

[taking hold of him.]

A N T I G O N E.

Alas! 'tis my sad office,

Let me perform it, to direct thy steps;

To this lov'd hand commit thy aged limbs;

I will be careful.

[She seats him on the stone.]

OE D I

OE D I P U S.

O! unhappy state!

CHORUS.

Now, wretched stranger, tell us who thou art,
Thy country, and thy name.

OE D I P U S.

Alas! my lords,

A poor abandon'd exile, but, O! do not----

CHORUS.

What say'st thou?

OE D I P U S.

Do not ask me who I am;

Enquire no farther.

CHORUS.

Wherefore?

OE D I P U S.

My sad race----

CHORUS.

Speak on.

[turning to Antigone.

OE D I P U S.

My daughter, how shall I proceed?

CHORUS.

Thy race, thy father-----

OE D I P U S.

O! Antigone,

What do I suffer?

ANTIGONE.

Speak, thou canst not be

More wretched than thou art.

OE D I P U S.

I will, for, O!

It cannot be conceal'd.

OE D I P U S

C H O R U S.

You do delay ;

Inform us strait.

OE D I P U S.

Know you the son of Laius ?

C H O R U S.

Alas !

OE D I P U S.

The race of Labdacus.

C H O R U S.

O ! Jove !

OE D I P U S.

Th' unhappy OEdipus.

C H O R U S.

And art thou he ?

OE D I P U S.

Be not affrighted at my words.

C H O R U S.

O ! heav'n !

OE D I P U S.

Wretch that I am ! what will become of me ?

C H O R U S.

Away, begone, fly from this place.

OE D I-

Th' unhappy OEdipus. OEdipus stammers, hesitates, and is, with the utmost difficulty, brought to discover himself to the chorus ; who, agreeably to his apprehensions, are so shocked and terrified when they know who he is, that they are even about to retract their promise of favour and protection, which they had just made to him. They seem afraid that his guilt was contagious ; and that a man so accursed, would bring down upon them the wrath of the gods ; till mollified by his predictions of future advantages to their country, they relent.

OEDIPUS.

Then where

Are all your promises? are they forgotten?

CHORUS.

Justice divine will never punish those
Who but repay the inj'ry they receive;
And fraud doth merit fraud for its reward.
Wherefore, begone, and leave us, lest once more
Our city be compell'd to force thee hence.

ANTIGONE.

O! my kind friends, as you revere the name
Of virtue, tho' you will not hear the pray'rs
Of my unhappy father, worn with age,
And laden with involuntary crimes;
Yet hear the daughter pleading for her fire,
And pity her, who with no evil eye
Beholds you, but, as one of the same race,
Born of one common father, here entreats
Your mercy to th' unhappy, for on you,
As on some god alone, we must rely;
Then grant this wish'd-for boon, O! grant it now,
By all that's dear to thee, thy sacred word,
Thy interest, thy children, and thy god;
'Tis not in mortals to avoid the crime
Which heav'n hath pre-ordain'd.

CHORUS.

We pity thee,

Daughter of OEdipus; we pity him,
And his misfortunes; but, of wrath divine
Still fearful, dare not alter our decree.

OEDIPUS.

Now who shall trust to glory and fair fame?

R 4

What

What shall it profit, that your pious city
 Was once for hospitable rites renown'd,
 That she alone wou'd pity and relieve
 Th' afflicted stranger? is she so to me
 Who drives me hence, and trembles at a name?
 Me you can never fear, and for my crimes
 I am the sufferer, not th' offender: what
 Touching my father I have spoke, alas!
 If 'tis for that you do abhor me thus,
 Was I to blame? the injury receiv'd
 I but repay'd, and therefore had I known
 The crime I acted, I were guiltless still:
 Whither I came, I came unknowingly;
 Not so they acted who have banish'd me.
 By your commands already here remov'd,
 O! by the gods, preserve, assist me now;
 If you revere them, do not thus despise
 What they decree, their eyes behold the good
 And view the evil man, nor shall the wicked
 Escape their wrath: use not their sacred names
 To cover crimes, and stain the fame of Athens:
 As you receiv'd the suppliant, O! remember
 Your plighted faith, preserve me, save me now;
 Look not contemptuous on this wretched form,
 Or cast reproach unmerited; I come
 Nor impious, nor prophane; and with me bring
 To Athens much of profit and renown,
 As when your king arrives, you all shall know;
 Mean time despise me not.

C H O-

Your pious city. In this, and many other passages of the OEdipus Coloneus Sophocles takes occasion to compliment his countrymen the Athenians, and more particularly the inhabitants of Coloneus; which is supposed to have been the place of his nativity.

CHORUS.

Old man, thy words
Are full of weight, and merit our observance;
If those who here preside but know thy purpose,
It doth suffice.

OEDIPUS.

But say, where is the king?

CHORUS.

Within his palace; but a messenger
Is gone to fetch him hither.

OEDIPUS.

O! my friends,
Think you a sightless wretch like me will move
His pity or his care, that he will come?

CHORUS.

Most readily, when he shall hear the name
Of OEdipus.

OEDIPUS.

And who shall tell it him?

CHORUS.

The journey's long; but passing travellers
Will catch the tale, and he must hear it soon;
Fear not, thy story is already known
On ev'ry side, 'twill quicken his slow steps,
And bring him instant hither.

OEDIPUS.

May he come
In happy hour to Athens and to me!
He will; what good man doth not love his country?

ANTIGONE.

O! Jove! what shall I say or think? my father----

OEDIPUS.

What says my daughter?

A N-

A N T I G O N E.

This way bent, behold

On a Sicilian steed, a woman comes,
Her face conceal'd by a Thessalian veil,
To shield her from the sun; am I deceiv'd,
Or, is it she? I know not what to think.
It is my sister, now she smiles upon me;
It must, it can be none but my Ismene.

OE D I P U S.

Who, my Antigone?

A N T I G O N E.

It is thy daughter,

My sister; but her voice will soon convince you.

S C E N E VI.

ISMENE and Attendant, OEDIPUS, ANTIGONE,
C H O R U S.

I S M E N E.

O! the sweet sounds! a father and a sister!
What pains have I not suffer'd in the search?
And now for grief can scarce behold you.

OE D I P U S.

Oh!

My daughter, art thou here?

I S M E N E.

Alas! my father,

How terribly thou look'st!

OE D I P U S.

From the same blood

The father and the daughter.

I S M E N E.

Wretched race!

OE D I-

OE D I P U S.

And art thou come, my daughter?

I S M E N E.

I have reach'd thee

With toil and labour.

OE D I P U S.

Touch me, O! my child!

I S M E N E.

Let me embrace you both.

OE D I P U S.

Both miserable!

I S M E N E. [they all embrace.

Join then a third as wretched as yourselves.

OE D I P U S.

Ismene, wherefore art thou come?

I S M E N E.

My care

For thee, my father, brought me here.

OE D I P U S.

For me?

I S M E N E.

That I might speak to thee; this faithful slave

Alone conducted me. [pointing to her attendant.

OE D I P U S.

Thy brothers, say,

What are they doing?

I S M E N E.

They are---what they are;

For, O! between them deadliest discord reigns.

OE D I P U S.

How like th' unmanly sons of Egypt's clime,

Where the men sit inglorious at the loom,

And to their wives leave each domestic care!

Ev'n

Ev'n thus my sons, who should have labour'd for me,
Like women idly sit at home, whilst you
Perform their office, and with filial care

[pointing to Antigone.

Attend a wretched father; this kind maid,
Ev'n from her infant days, hath wander'd long
An exile with me, and supported still
My feeble age; oft thro' the savage woods,
Naked and hungry, by the wint'ry storms
Or scorching heats afflicted, led me on,
And gave me food, unmindful of her own.
Thou too, Ismene, wert my faithful guard,
When I was driven forth; and now art come
To tell thy father what the gods declare;
A stranger now to Thebes, I know not what
Hath pass'd between them; thou hast some sad news
I know thou hast, to tell thy wretched father.

I S M E N E.

What I have suffer'd in the search of thee,
I pass in silence o'er, since to repeat,
Were but, alas! to double my misfortunes;
I only came to tell thee the sad fate
Of thy unhappy sons; a while they seem'd
As if they meant to yield the throne to Creon,
Nor stain their guilty hands with Theban blood,
Mindful of that pollution which remain'd
On thy devoted race; but now some god
Or their own wicked minds have rais'd a flame
Of dire contention, which shall gain the pow'r
Supreme, and reign in Thebes: Eteocles
Hath drove his elder Polynices forth;
Who, now an exile, seeks (as fame reports)
The Argians, and in solemn contract join'd

With

With these his new allies wou'd raise their fame
Above the stars, and sink our Thebes in ruin.
These are not words alone, 'tis now in act,
Alas! ev'n now I fear, nor know I when
The gods will take compassion on thy woes.

OE D I P U S.

Hast thou no hope they'll pity me?

I S M E N E.

I have;

Their oracles have said it,

OE D I P U S.

Ha! said what,

My daughter, tell me, what have they declar'd?

I S M E N E.

The time wou'd come, they said, when Thebes once more
Must seek thee, dead or living, for her safety.

OE D I P U S.

Why, what cou'd such a wretch as I do for them?

I S M E N E.

Their only hope, they say, is plac'd in thee,

OE D I P U S.

I, that am nothing, grown so pow'rful! whence
Can it proceed?

I S M E N E.

The gods, who once depress'd thee,

Now raise thee up again.

OE D I P U S.

It cannot be;

Who falls in youth will never rise in age.

I S M E N E.

Know, for this very purpose Creon comes;
E'er long thou may'st expect him.

OE D I.

OEDIPUS.

What to do,
My daughter?

ISMENE.

To remove thee hence, and place thee
Nearer to Thebes, but not within her borders.

OEDIPUS.

If not within, what profit can it be
To them?

ISMENE.

Thy tomb, rais'd in a foreign land,
They fear wou'd prove most fatal.

OEDIPUS.

But how know they
It must be so, unless some god declar'd it?

ISMENE.

For this alone they wish to have thee near
The borders, in their pow'r, and not thy own.

OEDIPUS.

To bury me at Thebes?

ISMENE.

That cannot be;
Thy crime forbids it.

OEDIPUS.

Then I'll never go.

ISMENE.

A time will come when they shall feel thy vengeance.

OEDIPUS.

What strange vicissitude can e'er produce
This wish'd event?

ISMENE.

Thy wrath, when at thy tomb
They shall be forc'd to meet.

OEDI-

OEDIPUS.

Who told thee this?

Ismene, say.

ISMENE.

The sacred ministers

Of Delphos.

OEDIPUS.

Came it from Apollo's shrine?

ISMENE.

On their return to Thebes they did report it.

OEDIPUS.

My sons, did they hear aught of this?

ISMENE.

Both heard,

And know it well.

OEDIPUS.

Yet, impious as they are,

Prefer'd a kingdom to their father's love.

ISMENE.

With grief I tell thee what with grief I heard.

OEDIPUS.

O! may the gods doom them to endless strife;

Ne'er may the battle cease, till OEdipus

Himself shall end it! then, nor he who bears

The sceptre now, shou'd long maintain the throne,

Nor Polynices e'er to Thebes return;

They shou'd not live, who drove a parent forth

To misery and exile; left by those

Who shou'd have lov'd, supported, and rever'd him;

I know they say, the city but comply'd

With my request, I ask'd for banishment;

Not then I ask'd it: in my desp'rate mind

When first I rag'd, I wish'd indeed for death;

It

It had been grateful then, but no kind friend
 Wou'd minister the boon; at length my grief
 Gave way, and when they saw my troubled soul
 Had taken ample vengeance on itself,
 After long stay, the city drove me forth;
 And those who cou'd have sav'd me: my base sons,
 Deaf to a father's pray'rs, permit me still
 To roam abroad, in poverty and exile:
 From these alone, far as their tender sex
 Can help me, I receive the means of life,
 All the sweet comfort, food, or needful rest,
 Earth can afford me now; whilst to my sons
 A throne was dearer than a father's love;
 But they shall never gain me for their friend,
 Ne'er reign in Thebes; these oracles declare
 They never shall; I do remember too
 Another prophecy, which Phœbus erst
 Deliver'd to me: let 'em send their Creon,
 Or any other pow'rful citizen,
 To drag me hence: my hospitable friends,
 If to those all-protecting deities
 Who here preside, you too will lend your aid,
 Athens shall find in me its best defence,
 And vengeance strike the foes of OEdipus.

C H O R U S.

Thou and thy daughters well-deserve our pity.
 And, for thy words are full of promis'd good
 To our lov'd city, I will tell thee all
 'Tis meet thou shou'dst perform:

OE D I P U S.

My best of friends,
 Instruct me; I am ready to obey.

CHORUS.

An expiation instant must thou make
To the offended pow'rs whose sacred seat
Thou hast profan'd.

OE D I P U S.

But, how must it be done?

CHORUS.

First, with pure hands, from th' ever-flowing spring,
Thy due libations pour.

OE D I P U S.

What follows then?

CHORUS.

Take thou a cup, wrought by some skilful hand,
Bind it with wreaths around.

OE D I P U S.

Of leaves or threads

Compos'd?

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S

CHORUS.

An expiation, &c. The remains of the antient drama, exclusive of their intrinsic merit with regard to its more essential parts, are extremely valuable, merely for the insight which they occasionally give us into almost every religious ceremony practised in earlier ages. Nothing can be more precise or compleat than this account of an expiation: the cup, which is to be of a peculiar form, must be bound with wreaths of wool; that wool must be from a new-born lamb; the water drawn from three different fountains, mix'd with honey, and every drop poured out; olive boughs must be held in the hand, and the whole done in the deepest silence. However ridiculous or absurd these circumstances may appear to us, we need not doubt but on the Athenian stage they must have cast an air of great solemnity over this scene, and have been well received by a Grecian audience. Our own Sophocles has trod the same path with success; his witches and fairies fell in with the superstitions of his cotemporaries, and not only secured their attention, but the applause and admiration of posterity.

OE D I P U S

C H O R U S.

Of wool, fresh from the new-shorn lamb.

OE D I P U S.

Is there aught else?

C H O R U S.

Then, turning to the sun,

Make thy libations.

OE D I P U S.

From the cup, thou say'st.

C H O R U S.

The water from three fountains drawn; and last
Remember, none be left.

OE D I P U S.

With that alone

Must it be fill'd?

C H O R U S.

Water with honey mix'd,

No wine; this pour on th' earth-----

OE D I P U S.

What then remains?

C H O R U S.

Take in thy hand of olive-boughs thrice nine;
And offering these, begin thy humble pray'r.

OE D I P U S.

But how address them? that concerns me near.

C H O-

Olive boughs. These were some of the 'κλαδοὶ ἱκτηριοί,' or
'supplicating boughs,' mention'd in the first scene of the OEdipus
Tyrannus: they were generally laurel or olive.

Vittatæ laurus, & supplicis arbor olivæ.

Stattus.

The number nine was always accounted mysterious, for various rea-
sons assigned by the commentators.

CHORUS.

Their name thou know'st implies, benevolent;
Intreat them therefore kindly now to prove
Benevolent to thee: this by thyself,
Or by another for thee; but, remember,
Low be the voice, and short the supplication;
That done, return: be careful to perform it;
I may assist thee then with confidence,
But if thou dost it not, must tremble for thee.

OE D I P U S.

My daughters, heard you this?

A N T I G O N E.

We did; command

What's to be done.

OE D I P U S.

What I can never do,
Pow'rless and blind as I am; one of you,
My daughters, must perform it.

A N T I G O N E.

One alone

May do the task of many, when the mind
Is active in it.

OE D I P U S.

Hence then, quick, away;

S 2

But

Their name, &c. The furies were called *Eumenides*, 'Eumenides,' i. e. 'favourable or propitious', for many reasons given by the scholiasts, &c. none of which are very satisfactory: some say, by an antiphrasis (like *Lucus a non lucendo*) being the direct contrary; others give them this appellation because their true names were considered as unlucky, and not to be pronounced. They might after all, perhaps, be called 'Eumenides' in the strictest sense, as being favourable to those who had been injured, and the avengers of all impiety.

But do not leave me here alone ; these limbs,
Without a guide, will never find their way.

I S M E N E.

Father, I go : but how to find the place
I know not.

C H O R U S.

Stranger, t'other side o'th' grove ;
There, some inhabitant will soon inform thee,
If thou shou'dst want assistance, or instruction.

I S M E N E.

Mean time, Antigone, remain thou here,
And guard our father well : cares are not cares,
When we endure them for a parent's sake.

[Exit Ismene.

S C E N E VII.

OE D I P U S, A N T I G O N E, C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

Stranger, albeit we know 'tis most ungrateful
To raise the sad remembrance of past woes,
Yet wou'd we gladly hear-----

OE D I P U S.

What wou'dst thou know?

C H O R U S.

The cause of thy unhappy state.

OE D I P U S.

Alas!

By all the sacred hospitable rites,
I beg thee do not ask me to reveal it ;
My crimes are horrible.

C H O R U S.

Already fame

Hath

Hath spread them wide, and still talks loudly of them;
Tell us the truth.

OE D I P U S.

Alas!

CHORUS.

Let me beseech thee!

OE D I P U S.

O! me!

CHORUS.

Comply: ask what thou wilt of me,
And thou shalt have it.

OE D I P U S.

I have suffer'd much;

The gods can witness 'twas against my will;
I knew not of it.

CHORUS.

Knew not what?

OE D I P U S.

The city,

Unknowing too, bound me in horrid nuptials.

CHORUS.

And didst thou then pollute, as fame reports,
Thy mother's bed?

OE D I P U S.

O! death to hear! I did:

Here, here they are.

CHORUS.

Who's there?

OE D I P U S.

My crimes! my daughters!

CHORUS.

Daughters and sisters of their father? Oh!
'Tis horrible indeed.

OE D I P U S.

'Tis woe on woe.

CHORUS.

Great Jove! both daughters of one hapless mother!

What hast thou suffer'd?

OE D I P U S.

Ills not to be borne!

CHORUS.

Didst thou then perpetrate the horrid deed?

OE D I P U S.

O! no!

CHORUS.

Not do it?

OE D I P U S.

I receiv'd from Thebes

A fatal gift; wou'd I had never ta'en it!

CHORUS.

And art thou not a murth'rer too?

OE D I P U S.

What's that

Thou say'st?

CHORUS.

Thy father----

OE D I P U S.

Thou add'st grief to grief.

CHORUS.

Did'st thou not murther him?

OE D I P U S.

I did; but hear----

CHORUS.

Hear what?

OE D I.

A fatal gift. Meaning the throne of Thebes, with Jocasta whom he married.

OE D I P U S.

The cause.

CHORUS.

What cause?

OE D I P U S.

I'll tell thee; know then,

I murder'd others too, yet by the laws

I stand absolv'd; 'twas done in ignorance.

CHORUS. [seeing Theseus who enters.

But, lo! the king, Ægean Theseus, comes;

The fame of thee hath brought him here already.

S C E N E VIII.

THESEUS, OEDIPUS, ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

T H E S E U S.

O! son of Laius, long e'er this the tale

Of thy disastrous fate, by many a tongue

Related, I had heard; thy eyes torn forth

By thy own desp'rate hand, and now I see

It was too true: thy garb and dreadful aspect

Speak who thou art: unhappy OEdipus,

I come to ask, in pity to thy woes,

What's thy request to Athens or to me;

Thine, or this hapless virgin on thy steps

Attendant; speak; for large must be the boon

I wou'd refuse thee; I have known too well,

Myself a wretched wanderer, the woes

Of cruel exile, not to pity thine;

Of toils and dangers, in a foreign land,

Much have I suffer'd, therefore not to me
 Shall the poor stranger ever sue in vain
 For aid and safety : mortals as we are,
 Uncertain ever is to-morrow's fate,
 Alike unknown to Theseus and to thee.

OEDIPUS.

Theseus, thy words declare thy noble nature,
 And leave me little to reply : thou know'st
 My story, who, and whence I am ; no more
 Remains, but that I tell thee my request,
 And we have done.

THESEUS.

Proceed then, and inform me.

OEDIPUS.

I come to give this wretched body to thee,
 To fight ungracious, but of worth more dear
 To thee, than fairest forms cou'd boast.

THESEUS.

What worth ?

OEDIPUS.

Hereafter thou shalt know, not now.

THESEUS.

But when

Shall we receive it ?

OEDIPUS.

Much have I suffer'd. This is almost literally translated by Virgil, in his speech of Dido to Aeneas,

Me quoque per multos similis fortuna labores

Jactatum, hac demum voluit consistere terra.

Non ignara mali, miseris succurrere disco.

Nothing can be more amiable than the character of Theseus ; he receives, pities, and comforts the unfortunate exile ; in return for his generosity, OEdipus gives him the most solemn assurances of future happiness, with certain success and victory to the whole state of Athens.

OE D I P U S.

When I am no more ;
When thou shalt bury me.

T H E S E U S.

Death is, it seems,
Thy chief concern, and life not worth thy care.

OE D I P U S.

That will procure me all the means of life.

T H E S E U S.

And is this all thou ask'st, this little boon ?

OE D I P U S.

Not little is the strife which shall ensue.

T H E S E U S.

What strife ? with whom ? thy children, or my own ?

OE D I P U S.

Mine, Theseus ; they wou'd have me back to Thebes.

T H E S E U S.

And wou'dst thou rather be an exile here ?

OE D I P U S.

Once they refus'd me.

T H E S E U S.

Anger suits but ill
With low estate, and miseries like thine.

OE D I P U S.

Hear first, and then condemn me.

T H E S E U S.

Not unheard
All thou can'st urge, wou'd I reprove thee ; speak.

OE D I P U S.

O ! Theseus, I have borne the worst of ills.

T H E S E U S.

The curses on thy race ?

OE D I P U S.

O! no! all Greece

Hath heard of them.

T H E S E U S.

What more than mortal woe

Afflicts thee then?

OE D I P U S.

Ev'n this: my cruel sons

Have driv'n me from my country; never more

Must Thebes receive a parricide.

T H E S E U S.

Why then

Recall thee now, if thou must ne'er return?

OE D I P U S.

Commanded by an oracle divine.

T H E S E U S.

Why, what doth it declare?

OE D I P U S.

That Thebes shall yield

To thee, and to thy arms.

T H E S E U S.

But whence shou'd spring

Such dire contention?

OE D I-

That Thebes shall yield, &c. Those, who are acquainted with the Grecian history, and the many battles fought between the Thebans and Athenians, will easily perceive the design of Sophocles in this agreeable flattery of his countrymen. The abbé Sallier has gone so far as to make the whole of this tragedy political, and alluding throughout to the circumstances of the times in which it was written. He fixes the date of it to a particular period of the Peloponnesian war, and endeavours to explain several passages in favour of his opinion; but I refer my readers to his ingenious dissertation, which they will find in the sixth volume of the *histoire de l'Académie des Inscriptions, &c.* p. 385.

OEDIPUS.

Dearest son of Ægeus,
 From age and death exempt, the gods alone
 Immortal and unchangeable remain,
 Whilst all things else fall by the hand of time,
 The universal conqu'ror: earth laments
 Her fertile pow'rs exhausted; human strength
 Is wither'd soon; ev'n faith and truth decay,
 And from their ashes fraud and falsehood rise;
 Nor friendship long from man to man endures,
 Or realm to realm; to each, successive rise
 Bitter and sweet, and happiness and woe.
 Athens and Thebes thou see'st united now,
 And all is well; but, passing time shall bring
 The fatal day (and slight will be the cause)
 That soon shall change the bonds of amity
 And holy faith, for feuds and deadliest hate;
 Then bury'd long in earth, shall this cold corse
 Drink their warm blood, which from the mutual wound
 Frequent shall flow; it must be as I tell thee,
 If Jove be Jove, and great Apollo true.
 But why shou'd I reveal the fix'd decree
 Of all-deciding heav'n? Permit me now
 To end where I began; thy plighted faith
 Once more confirm, and never shalt thou say
 The wretched OEdipus to Theseus came

An

From age and death, &c. This just and beautiful sentiment is, with great propriety, put into the mouth of OEdipus, whose age and misfortunes would naturally incline him to moral reflections, in which the OEdipus Coloneus seems peculiarly to abound, and which render this play, perhaps not the most interesting in its circumstances, at least more instructive and agreeable than any of the rest.

An ufelefs and unprofitable gueft,
If the immortal gods have not deceiv'd me.

C H O R U S.

O! king, already hath this man declar'd
The fame good will to thee and to our country

T H E S E U S.

Can I reject benevolence and love
Like this, my friends? O! no! the common rites
Of hospitality, this altar here,
The witness of our mutual vows, forbid it;
He comes a suppliant to these goddesses,
And pays no little tribute both to me
And to my kingdom; he shall find a seat
Within my realms, for I revere his virtues:
If here it pleaseth him to stay, remember [to the chorus.
'Tis my command you guard this stranger well.
If thou wou'dst rather go with me, thou may'st;
I leave it to thy choice. [to OEdipus.

O E D I P U S.

Reward them, Jove.

T H E S E U S.

What say'st thou, wilt thou follow me?

O E D I P U S.

I wou'd,

If it were lawful, but it must be here---

This is the place-----

T H E S E U S.

For what? I'll not deny thee---

O E D I P U S.

Where I must conquer those who banish'd me.

T H E S E U S.

That wou'd be glory and renown to this
Thy place of refuge.

O E D I.

OE D I P U S.

If I may depend

On thy fair promise.

T H E S E U S.

Fear not, I shall ne'er

Betray my friend.

OE D I P U S.

I will not bind thee to it

By oath like those whom we suspect of ill.

T H E S E U S.

Thou need'st not, OEdipus, my word's my oath.

OE D I P U S.

How must I act then?

T H E S E U S.

Fear'st thou aught?

OE D I P U S.

I do.

A force will come against me.

[pointing to the chorus.

T H E S E U S.

Here's thy guard;

These shall protect thee.

OE D I P U S.

If thou goest, remember

And save me, Theseus.

T H E S E U S.

Teach not me my duty.

OE D I P U S.

Still am I fearful.

T H E S E U S.

Theseus is not so.

OE D I P U S.

Know'st thou not what they threaten'd?

T H E

T H E S E U S.

This I know,

No pow'r on earth shall wrest thee from this place.
 Oft-times the angry soul will vent its wrath
 In idle threats, with high and empty words,
 Which ever, as the mind is to itself
 Restor'd, are---nothing: they may boast their strength,
 And say they'll tear thee from me; but, I tell thee.
 The journey wou'd be long and tedious to them;
 They will not hazard it, they dare not: therefore
 Be comforted, for if by Phœbus sent
 Thou hither cam'st, thou'rt safe without my aid,
 Ev'n if I leave thee safe; for know, the name
 Of Theseus here sufficeth to protect thee. [Exit Theseus.]

S C E N E IX.

OEDIPUS, ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E I.

Thou art come in happy time,
 Stranger, to this blifsful clime,

Long

Thou art come, &c. This is the first song or intermede of the chorus, who in most beautiful language (for so it is in the original) sing the praises of Attica; the extraordinary fertility of its soil, knowledge of horsemanship, and skill in naval affairs. Sophocles has apparently taken this opportunity to celebrate the place of his birth, and at the same time pay a compliment to his countrymen; one may easily imagine with what applause it must have been received by an Athenian audience.

This chorus closes the act, which the reader may observe, is of a most enormous length, and unproportionable to the rest. Brumoy,

to

Long for swiftest steeds renown'd,
Fertil'ft of the regions round,
Where, beneath the ivy shade,
In the dew-besprinkled glade,
Many a love-lorn nightingale
Warbles sweet her plaintive tale,
Where the vine in clusters pours
Her sweets secur'd from wintry show'rs,
Nor scorching suns, nor raging storm
The beauties of the year deform.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Where the sweet Narcissus growing,
Where the yellow Crocus blowing
Round the sacred altars twine,
Off'ring to the pow'rs divine;
Where the pure springs perpetual flow,
Wat'ring the verdant meads below,
Which with its earth-enriching waves
The fair Cephissus ever laves.
Where with his ever-sporting train,
Bacchus wantons on the plain;
Pleas'd with the muses still to rove,
And golden Venus, queen of love.

STROPHE II.

Alone within this happy land,
Planted here by nature's hand,
Which, nor Asia's fertile plains,
Nor Pelops' spacious isle contains,

Pallas,

to avoid the absurdity, begins the second act at the first entrance of Theseus, and calls this the second intermede, though he forgets to tell us which is the first.

Pallas, thy sacred olive grows ;
 Striking terror on our foes,
 Ever free from hostile rage,
 From wanton youth, or greedy age ;
 Happy in sage Minerva's love,
 And guarded still by Morian Jove.

A N T I S T R O P H E II.

But nobler gifts, and fairer fame,
 Athens, yet adorn thy name ;
 Such wond'rous gifts hath pour'd on thee,
 Thy great protecting deity :
 Here first obedient to command.
 Form'd by Neptune's skilful hand ;
 The steed was taught to know the rein,
 And bear the chariot o'er the plain :
 Here first along the rapid tide,
 The stately vessels learn'd to ride ;
 And swifter down the current flow
 Than Nereids cut the waves below.

[Exeunt.

A C T II.

S C E N E I.

ANTIGONE, OEDIPUS, CHORUS.

A N T I G O N E.

GREAT are thy praises, Attica, and now
 The time is come to shew thou dost deserve them.

OE D I-

Thy sacred olive. These olives were called '*Morian*,' or '*Moriz*,' for some reasons, not very material, assigned by the commentators : it is sufficient to observe, that as the favourite trees of Minerva, the protectress of Athens, they were held sacred, and whoever cut them down was deemed accursed ; for which reason, it is said, that when the Lacedæmonians invaded Attica, these alone were spared in the general devastation.

OEDIPUS.

What means my daughter? Speak; what new event
Alarms thee?

ANTIGONE.

Creon, with a num'rous band
Of follow'rs, comes this way.

OEDIPUS.

O! now, my friends,

If ever, help me.

CHORUS.

Fear not, we'll protect thee.

Though I am old, the strength of Attica
Is not decay'd.

SCENE II.

CREON, with Attendants, OEDIPUS, ANTIGONE,
CHORUS.

CREON.

Most honour'd citizens,
I see you look with eyes of fear upon me,
Without a cause; for know, I came not here
Intending aught of violence or ill
Against a city, so renown'd in Greece
As yours hath ever been; I only came,
Commission'd by the state of Thebes, to fetch
This old man back, if by persuasion mild
I cou'd induce him to return; not sent
By one alone, but the united voice
Of a whole people, who assign'd the task
To me, because, by blood united to him,
I felt for his misfortunes as my own.

VOL. II.

T

Come

Come therefore, OEdipus, attend me home,
 Thebes calls thee back, thy kingdom now demands thee,
 By me she calls thee; listen to thy friend,
 For surely Creon were the worst of men,
 If he cou'd look on woes like thine unmov'd;
 When I behold thee in a foreign land
 A wretched wand'rer, forc'd to beg thy bread
 From place to place, with this unhappy maid,
 Whom little did I think to see expos'd
 To misery and shame, of nuptial rites
 Hopeless, and thus bereft of ev'ry aid:
 O! 'tis reproach and infamy to us
 And to our race; but 'tis already known,
 And cannot be conceal'd: O! OEdipus,
 I here beseech thee, by our country's gods,
 Return to Thebes, bid thou a kind farewell,
 For she deserves it, to this noble city,
 But still remember thy own dearer country.

OE D I P U S.

Thou daring hypocrite, whose specious wiles
 Beneath fair semblance mean but to betray,
 Why wou'dst thou tempt me thus; why thus once more
 Ensnare me in thy toils, and make me still
 More wretched than I am? Long time oppress'd
 By heaviest woes, I pined within my palace,
 And long'd for exile, but you then refus'd
 To let me go, till satiated with grief
 My soul at length was calm, and much I wish'd
 To spend my few remaining years at home;
 Then thou, for little did the kindred blood
 Thou talk'st of then avail; didst banish me;
 And now again thou com'st to make me wretched.
 Because thou seest this kind benignant city

Embrace

Embrace and cherish, thou wou'dst drag me hence;
 With sweetest words cov'ring thy bitter mind,
 Professing love to those who chuse it not;
 He, who denies his charitable aid
 To the poor beggar in his utmost need,
 And if abundance comes, shou'd offer that
 Which is not wanted, little merits thanks.
 Such is thy bounty now, in word alone
 And not in deed, the friend of OEdipus.
 But I will tell them what thou art; thou can'st not
 To take me hence, but leave me in the borders
 Of Thebes, that so thy kingdom may escape
 Th' impending ills which this avenging city
 Shall pour upon it; but 'twill come to pass
 As I foretold, my evil genius still
 Shall haunt you, and my sons no more of Thebes
 Inherit than shall serve them for a grave.
 Thy country's fate is better known to me
 Than to thyself, for my instruction comes
 From surer guides, from Phœbus and from Jove.
 Thy artful speech shall little serve thy purpose,
 'Twill only hurt thy cause: therefore begone;
 I'm not to be persuaded. Let me live
 In quiet here, for wretched as I am,
 'Twill be some comfort to be far from thee.

CREON.

Think'st thou I heed thy words? Who'll suffer most
 For this perverseness, thou, or I?

OEDIPUS.

I trust
 Thy little arts will nought avail with me,
 Or with my friends.

OE D I P U S

C R E O N.

Poor wretch! no time can cure

Thy follies, thy old age is grown delirious.

OE D I P U S.

Thou haste a hateful tongue; but few, how just
Soe'er they be, can always speak aright.

C R E O N.

But to say much, and to say well, are things
Which differ widely.

OE D I P U S.

What thou say'st no doubt

Is brief, and proper too.

C R E O N.

'Twill hardly seem so

To those, who think like thee.

OE D I P U S.

Away, nor dare

Direct my steps, as if thou had'st the pow'r

To place me where thou wilt.

C R E O N.

Remember all

To witness this, for he shall answer it

When he is mine.

OE D I P U S.

But who shall force me hence

Against the will of these my friends?

C R E O N.

Their aid

Is vain; already I have done what much

Will hurt thee.

OE D I P U S.

Ha! what threats are these?

C R E O N.

CREON.

Thy daughters

Must go with me; one is secur'd, and now
This moment will I wrest the other from thee.

OEDIPUS.

O! me!

CREON.

I'll give thee much more cause for grief.

OEDIPUS.

Hast thou my daughter?

CREON.

Aye, and will have this.

OEDIPUS.

[to the chorus.

What will you do, my friends? Will you forsake me?

Will you not drive this vile abandon'd man

Forth from your city?

CHORUS.

Stranger, hence, away;

Thy actions are most shameful and unjust.

CREON.

Slaves, do your office; bear her off by force,

If she consents not.

ANTIGONE.

Whither shall I fly

For aid? What god or man shall I implore

To succour me?

CHORUS.

Alas! what wou'dst thou do?

CREON.

I touch not him, but I must have my own.

ANTIGONE.

O! princes, aid me now!

T 3

CHO.

OEDIPUS

CHORUS.

'Tis most unjust.

CREON.

I say 'tis just.

CHORUS.

Then prove it.

CREON.

They are mine.

CHORUS.

O Citizens!

ANTIGONE.

O! loose me! if you do not,

You shall repent this violence.

CREON.

Go on,

I will defend you.

OEDIPUS.

He, who injures me,

Offends the city.

CHORUS.

Said I not before

It wou'd be thus?

CREON.

[to the chorus.

Let go the maid this instant.

CHORUS.

Command where thou hast power.

CREON.

Let her go.

CHORUS.

Begone thyself: what, ho! my countrymen,

The city is in danger; haste and save us.

ANTIGONE.

[Creon's followers seize on Antigone.

I'm

I'm seiz'd, my friends, O! help!

OE D I P U S.

Where is my daughter?

ANTIGONE.

Torn from thee.

OE D I P U S.

O! stretch forth thy hand.

ANTIGONE.

I cannot.

CREON.

Away with her.

OE D I P U S.

O! wretched OEdipus!

CREON.

No longer shall these tender props support
Thy feeble age; since thou art still resolv'd
Against thyself, thy country, and thy friends,
By whose command I come, remain perverse
And obstinate, old man; but know, hereafter
Time will convince thee thou hast ever been
Thy own worst foe; thy fiery temper still
Must make thee wretched.

CHORUS.

Stranger, stir not hence.

CREON.

I charge you, touch me not.

T 4

CHO-

No longer, &c. Meaning his daughters, Antigone and Ismene: the literal translation would be 'Thou shalt no longer walk, leaning on these sticks.' A little farther on, OEdipus calls Antigone 'Ψιλον ομμα,' 'his only eye:' passages of this nature, the reader will easily perceive, must be softened a little in the translation.

OE D I P U S

C H O R U S.

Thou shalt not go,
Till thou restor'st the virgins.

C R E O N.

I must have

A nobler ransom from your city, these
Shall not suffice.

C H O R U S.

What mean'st thou?

C R E O N.

He shall go,

This OEdipus.

C H O R U S.

Thy threats are terrible.

C R E O N.

I'll do't; and only he, who governs here,
Shall hinder me.

O E D I P U S.

O! insolence! thou wilt not,

Thou dar'st not force me.

C R E O N.

Hold thy peace.

O E D I P U S.

Not ev'n

The dreadful goddesses, who here preside,
Shou'd bind my tongue from heaviest curses on thee,
For thou hast robb'd me of the only light
These eyes cou'd boast; but may th' all-seeing sun
Behold and punish thee and all thy race,
And load thy age with miseries like mine!

C R E O N.

Inhabitants of Athens, hear ye this?

O E D I-

OE D I P U S.

They do, and see that but with fruitless words
I can repay the inj'ries I receive;
For I am weak with age, and here alone.

C R E O N.

No longer will I curb my just resentment,
But force thee hence.

OE D I P U S.

O! me!

C H O R U S.

What boldness, stranger,
Cou'd make thee hope to do a deed like this
Unpunish'd?

C R E O N.

'Tis resolv'd.

C H O R U S.

Our Athens then
Is fall'n indeed, and is no more a city.

C R E O N.

In a just cause the weak may foil the mighty.

OE D I P U S.

Hear how he threatens-----

C H O R U S.

What he'll ne'er perform.

C R E O N.

That Jove alone can tell.

C H O R U S.

Shall injuries

Like these be suffer'd?

C R E O N.

For I am weak, &c. This line in the original is, I think, very absurdly put into the mouth of Creon; I have taken the liberty to give it to OEdipus, from whom it certainly comes with more propriety.

OEDIPUS

CREON.

Call it injury,

Thou may'st, 'tis such as thou perforce must bear.

CHORUS.

This is too much: ye rulers of the land

My fellow-citizens, come forth, and save us.

SCENE III.

THESEUS, CREON, OEDIPUS.

ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

THESEUS.

Whence is this clamour? wherefore am I call'd

From sacred rites at Neptune's altar paid,

Our guardian god? say, what's the cause that thus

In haste I'm summon'd hither?

OEDIPUS.

O! my friend,

For well I know thy voice, most cruelly

Have I been treated by this man.

THESEUS.

Who did it?

OEDIPUS.

This Creon, whom thou see'st, hath raviſh'd from me

My only help, my daughters.

THESEUS.

Ha! what say'st thou?

OEDIPUS.

'Tis as I tell thee.

THESEUS. [to his attendants.

Quick, dispatch my servants,

Fly to the altar, summon all my people,

Horsemen

Horsemen and foot; give o'er the sacrifice,
And instant to the double gate repair,
Lest with the virgins the base ravishers
Escape unpunish'd, and my guest thus injur'd
Laugh me to scorn for cowardice. Away.
Were I to punish this oppressor here [turning to Creon,
As my resentment bids, and he deserves,
He shou'd this instant fall beneath my rage;
But the same justice, he to others deals,
Himself shall meet from us; thou shalt not go
Till those, whom thou didst basely ravish hence,
Are brought before me: 'twas unlike thyself,
Unworthy of thy country and thy race,
To enter thus a cultivated city,
Where law and justice reign, with violence
And rapine, snatching what thy fancy pleas'd.
Or didst thou think I rul'd a desert land,
Or that my people were a race of slaves,
And Theseus but the shadow of a king?
Thebes never taught thee such destructive lessons,
For she abhors injustice; when she hears
That Creon, thus despising sacred laws,
Hath ta'en with brutal violence my right,
And wou'd have stol'n a wretched suppliant from me,
She'll not approve thy conduct: say I went
To Thebes, how just soever were the cause,
I shou'd not seize on aught without the leave
Of him who govern'd there; but, as becomes
A stranger, bear myself unblam'd by all.
Thou hast disgrac'd thy country, and thy friends,
And weight of years hath ta'en thy senses from thee:
Again I say, restore the virgins to me,
Or stay with me thyself, for so thou shalt,

Howe'er

Howe'er unwilling; what I've said, remember,
Is what I have resolv'd, therefore determine.

CHORUS. [to Creon.

Stranger, thy actions, noble as thou art,
But ill become thy family and name,
Because unjust; but thou behold'st thy fate.

CREON.

Theseus, it was not that I thought this city
Without or guards to save, or laws to rule,
Which brought me here, nor unadvis'd I came,
But that I hop'd you never wou'd receive
My kindred here against my will, nor e'er
Embrace a vile incestuous parricide,
Or cherish and protect him, in a land
Whose court, renown'd for justice, suffers not
Such poor abandon'd exiles to reside
Within its borders; therefore did I this,
Which yet I had not done, but for the curses
Which he hath pour'd on me, and all my race;
Revenge inspir'd me: anger, well thou know'st,
Can never be extinguish'd but by death,
Which closeth ev'ry wound: at present, Theseus,
It must be as thou wilt; my want of pow'r,
How just soe'er my cause, demands submission;
Yet old and weak, I shall not tamely yield.

OE D I P U S.

Audacious man! think'st thou the vile reproach,
Thou utter'st, falls on me, or on thyself?
Thou who upbraid'st me thus for all my woes,
Murder and incest, which against my will
I had committed; so it pleas'd the gods,
Offended at my race for former crimes,
But I am guiltless; canst thou name a fault

Deserving

Deserving this? for tell me, was it mine,
 When to my father Phœbus did declare
 That he shou'd one day perish by the hand
 Of his own child; was OEdipus to blame,
 Who had no being then? if, born at length
 To wretchedness, he met his fire unknown,
 And slew him, that involuntary deed
 Canst thou condemn? and for my fatal marriage,
 Dost thou not blush to name it? was not she
 Thy sister, she who bore me, ignorant
 And guiltless woman! afterwards my wife,
 And mother to my children? what she did,
 She did unknowing; not like thee, who thus
 Dost purposely upbraid us both; heav'n knows
 Unwillingly I wedded her, and now
 Unwillingly repeat the dreadful tale;
 But, nor for that, nor for my murder'd father,
 Have I deserv'd thy bitter taunts; for tell me,
 Thy life attack'd, wou'dst thou have stay'd to ask
 Th' assassin if he were thy father? no,
 Self-love wou'd urge thee to revenge the insult:
 Thus was I drove to ill by th' angry gods;
 This, shou'd my father's soul revisit earth,
 Himself wou'd own, and pity OEdipus.
 Thy bold and impious tongue still utters all;
 Just or unjust thou pour'st thy foul reproach
 On me, pretending to revere the name
 Of Theseus and his country; but remember,
 The city, whom thou thus hast prais'd, is fam'd
 For piety, and rev'rence to the gods;
 Yet wou'dst thou drive a needy suppliant thence,
 And lead him captive; thou hast stol'n my daughter,
 But I implore the dreadful goddesses

To grant me aid, that thou may'st feel the pow'r
Which thou contemn'st, and know the force of Athens.

CHORUS.

[to Theseus.

O! king, this stranger merits thy regard,
His woes are great, his cause shou'd be defended.

THESEUS.

No more, the ravishers are fled with speed,
Whilst we, who suffer, stand inactive here.

CREON.

Speak thy commands, for I must yield to thee.

THESEUS.

Go thou before me, I shall follow close;
If here thou hast conceal'd the virgins, now
Discover them; if hence, to other's hands
Committed, they are fled, they shall not scape,
My servants soon will fetch them back; mean time
Remember thy condition, for thy fate
Hath caught thee in the net which thou hadst spread
For others; but, what evil means acquire
Is seldom kept: thou cam'st not naked here,
Or unattended, thus to do an act
Of violence; e'er long I'll know on what
Thou did'st rely, nor by a single arm
Shall Athens fall inglorious: hear'st thou this,
Or are my words unheeded?

CREON.

'Tis not now

A time to answer; we shall know at home
What must be done.

THE-

What evil means, &c. This maxim is adopted by Plautus, in his *Pænulus*, 'malé partum malé disperit.' We have likewise a proverb of our own, though it is rather a coarse one, expressive of the same sentiment, viz. 'What is got over the devil's back is spent under his belly.'

THESEUS.

Thou threat'nest; but go on.

Stay thou in quiet here, for if I live, [turning to OEdip.

I will not rest till I restore thy daughters.

[Exeunt Theseus and Creon.]

SCENE IV.

OEDIPUS, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Now the combatants prepare,

And hasten to the field of war,

Theseus, their great and god-like friend,

The hapless virgins shall defend.

O! cou'd I hear the dreadful battle roar,

Or near Apollo's sacred shrine,

Or on the torch-enlighten'd shore,

Or

Now the combatants, &c. This is the second song, or intermede of the chorus, who, imagining from what had passed in the preceding scene, that a battle must inevitably follow between Theseus and Creon, form various conjectures concerning the place, where it would be fought: relying on the strength and valour of their countrymen, to whom they preface certain victory. This gives time for the recovery of Antigone and Ismene, and prepares the audience for the events in the next act.

On the torch-enlightened shore. Torches were carried in the Eleusinian rites, probably in memory of those which Ceres and her attendants are supposed to have made use of in their search after Proserpine; these mysteries were performed by night in the most solemn manner by the Eumolpidæ, or priests of Ceres; none were admitted to them but the pure and unspotted, who were bound to inviolable secrecy.

Or Ceres, where thy priests their rites divine
Perform, with lips in solemn silence seal'd,
And myst'ries ne'er by mortal tongue reveal'd.

A N T I S T R O P H E I.

At yon snowy mountain's feet
Westward perchance the warriors meet;
Chariot and horse with mutual rage
On OEta's flow'ry plains engage;
Around their Theseus now, a valiant band,
See Athens' martial sons unite
To save their native land;
All shake their glitt'ring spears, and urge the fight;
All who thy pow'r, Equestrian Pallas, own,
Or bow to Neptune, Rhea's honour'd son.

S T R O P H E II.

The bloody scene shall soon be o'er,
Creon the virgin shall restore;
My soul prophetic sees the maid
For pious duty thus repaid;
For ever active is the pow'r of Jove,
From whom perpetual blessings flow:
O! that I now cou'd, like the dove,
Soar thro' the skies, and mark the field below,
The wish'd-for conquest joyful to behold,
And triumph in the vict'ry I foretold!

A N T I S T R O P H E II.

Thou pow'r supreme, all pow'rs above,
All-seeing, all-performing Jove,
Grant that the rulers of this land
May soon subdue the hostile band!
Thee too, O! Pallas, hunter Phœbus, thee
Do we invoke, with thee be join'd
Thy virgin sister deity,

Who

Who loves o'er lawns to chase the spotted hind;
On you we call, your aid propitious bring,
O! haste, protect our country and our king.

[Exeunt.

A C T III.

S C E N E I.

OEDIPUS, THESEUS, ANTIGONE,
ISMENE, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

I'M no false prophet, stranger, for behold
Thy daughters.

OEDIPUS.

Ha! what say'st thou, where, O! where?

ANTIGONE.

My father, O! my father, what kind god
Rais'd up this friend who hath restor'd us to thee?

OEDIPUS.

Are then my daughters with me?

ANTIGONE.

Theseus' arm

Hath brought us here: to him and to his friends
We owe our safety.

OEDIPUS.

O! come nigh, my children,

Let me embrace you; never did I think
Again to fold you in these arms.

ANTIGONE.

We come

With joy, my father.

VOL. II.

U

OED I.

OE D I P U S.

OE D I P U S.

O! where are you?

A N T I G O N E.

Here.

OE D I P U S.

My dearest children!

A N T I G O N E.

To our father still

May every pleasure come!

[leaning on Antigone.

OE D I P U S.

My best support!

A N T I G O N E.

The wretched bear the wretched.

[embracing them.

OE D I P U S.

I have all

That's precious to me; were I now to dye,
 Whilst you are here, I shou'd not be unhappy:
 Support me, daughters, to your father's side
 Close press'd; O! sooth to peace a wretched exile,
 Long time deserted: tell me what hath happen'd,
 But let the tale be short, as best becomes
 Thy tender age.

[pointing to Theseus.

A N T I G O N E.

Here is our great protector,

He will inform you; so shall what I speak

Be brief, as thou wou'dst have it.

OE D I P U S.

Noble Theseus,

My children thus beyond my hopes restor'd,

If I shou'd talk too long on such a theme,

Thou

Thou wilt not wonder; 'tis to thee alone
 I owe my joys; thou didst protect and save
 My much-lov'd daughters; may the gods repay
 Thee and thy kingdom for this goodness to me!
 Here only have I found or faith, or truth,
 Or justice; you alone possess them all;
 I will attest it, for I know it well;
 I feel your virtues; what I have is all
 From you. O! king, permit me but to touch
 Thy hand; O! stretch it forth, or let me kiss
 Thy honour'd lips! but O! what do I say!
 Can such a wretch as OEdipus e'er hope
 With guilty hands to touch a man like thee,
 So pure, so spotless? yet I must embrace thee;
 They only who have known misfortune feel
 For other's griefs with sympathizing woe.
 Hail! best of men, and may'st thou ever be,
 As thou hast been, my guardian and my friend!

THESEUS.

Thus happy as thou must be in thy children,
 Had'st thou said more, much more, and talk'd to them
 Rather than me, it had not mov'd my wonder;
 Nor think I shou'd resent it: not by words
 Wou'd Theseus be distinguish'd, but by deeds
 Illustrious; this thou know'st, for what I swore
 I have perform'd, restor'd thy daughters to thee,
 Safe from the tyrant's threats: how past the conflict
 Why shou'd I boast? they at their leisure best
 May tell you all: mean-time to what I heard,
 As hither coming, OEdipus, attend:
 Of little import seem'd the circumstance,
 And yet 'twas strange; but nought shou'd mortal man
 Deem or beneath his notice or his care.

OE D I P U S.

What is it, son of Ægeus? O! inform me,
For nothing have I heard.

T H E S E U S.

A man, they say,
Who boasts himself by blood ally'd to thee,
At Neptune's altar, whilst I sacrific'd,
In humblest posture stood.

OE D I P U S.

What cou'd it mean?

Whence came he?

T H E S E U S.

That I know not; this alone
They told me, suppliant he requested much
To talk a while with thee.

OE D I P U S.

With me? 'tis strange,
And yet methinks important.

T H E S E U S.

He desir'd

But to converse with thee, and then depart.

OE D I P U S.

Who can it be?

T H E S E U S.

Hast thou no friend at Argos,
None of thy kindred there who wish'd to see thee?

OE D I P U S.

No more, my friend.

T H E S E U S.

What say'st thou?

OE D I P U S.

Do not ask me.

T H E-

THESEUS.

Ask what-----

OEDIPUS.

I know him now; I know too well

Who's at the altar.

THESEUS.

Who is it?

OEDIPUS.

My son;

That hateful son, whose voice I loath to hear.

THESEUS.

But why not hear him? still thou may'st refuse
What he shall ask.

OEDIPUS.

I cannot, cannot bear it:

Do not oblige me.

THESEUS.

But the sacred place,

Where now he stands, and rev'rence to the gods,
Demand it of thee.

ANTIGONE.

Let me, O! my father,
Young as I am, admonish thee! O! grant
Thy friend his just request, obey the gods,
And let our brother come; whate'er he says
It need not draw thee from thy first resolve.

U 3

What

I know him now. OEdipus is at first at a loss to guess who this stranger could be that enquired after him, but on recollection concludes it was his son. 'Antigone & sa sœur (says Brumoy) devinent que c'est leur frere Polynice, & elles le disent à leur pere;' the French critic is here mistaken, for OEdipus is not told by his daughters, but imagines himself it must be Polynices, as soon as Theseus mentions his coming from Argos.

What harm to hear him? words have oft produc'd
 The noblest works: remember 'tis thy child,
 Thou didst beget him; tho' he were the worst
 Of sons to thee, yet wou'd it ill become
 A father to return it: let him come.

Others like thee have base unworthy children,
 And yet their minds are soften'd to forgiveness
 By friend's advice, and all their wrath subdu'd.
 Think on thy own unhappy parent's fate,
 Thence may'st thou learn what dreadful ills have flow'd
 From anger's bitter fountain; thou, alas!
 Art a sad proof; those sightless eyes too well
 Bear witness to it; those who only ask
 What justice warrants thou'd not ask in vain,
 Nor, who receives a benefit forget
 The hand that gave, but study to repay it.

OE D I P U S.

You have o'ercome me: with reluctant pleasure
 I yield; my children, be it as you please:
 But if he comes, O! Theseus, guard my life.

T H E S E U S.

I've said enough; no more: I will not boast,
 But thou art safe if heav'n forsakes not me.

S C E N E

With reluctant pleasure. The original is remarkably elegant;
 'Βασιλεῦ ἡδονῇ νικᾷτε με.' I have endeavoured to render it as
 closely as possible.

SCENE II.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

In sacred wisdom's path is seldom seen
 The wretch, whom fordid love of wealth inspires ;
 Neglectful of the happy golden mean,
 His soul nor truth nor heav'nly knowledge fires :
 No length of days to him can pleasure bring,
 In death alone he finds repose,
 End of his wishes and his woes ;
 In that uncomfortable night
 Where never music's charms delight,
 Nor virgin choirs their hymenæals sing.

ANTISTROPHE.

The happiest fate of man is not to be ;
 And next in bliss is he who soon as born,
 From the vain world and all its sorrows free,
 Shall whence he came with speediest foot return ;
 For youth is full of folly, toils and woe,
 Of war, sedition, pain and strife,
 With all the busy ills of life,
 Till helpless age comes creeping on,
 Deserted, friendless and alone,
 Which neither pow'r nor joy nor pleasure knows.

U 4

EPODE.

In sacred wisdom's path, &c. This is the third song, or intermede of the chorus, who, shock'd at the unparallel'd misfortunes of OEdipus, fall into some melancholy reflections on the miseries of old age, and the unhappy condition of human life, in every period of it ; this gives time and prepares the audience for the arrival of Polynices.

EPODE.

The hapless Oedipus, like me,
 Is doom'd to age and misery;
 Ev'n as around the northern shore
 The bleak winds howl, and tempests roar,
 Contending storms in terror meet,
 And dashing waves for ever beat;
 Thus is the wretched king with grief oppress'd,
 And woes on woes afflict his long-distemper'd breast.

[Exeunt.]

A C T IV.

SCENE I.

OEDIPUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

ANTIGONE.

THIS way, my father, lo! the wretched man
 Approaches, unattended and in tears.

OEDIPUS.

Who comes, my child?

ANTIGONE.

Ev'n he I told thee of,

Poor Polynices,

SCENE II.

POLYNICES, OEDIPUS, ANTIGONE,
ISMENE, CHORUS.

POLYNICES.

O! my sisters, see

Of

O! *my sisters, &c.* Nothing can be more artful, tender and pathetic than this speech of Polynices; conscious of his own guilt,
 and

Of all mankind the most unhappy ; where
 Shall I begin ? shall I lament my own,
 Or shall I weep an aged parent's fate ?
 For O ! 'tis horrible to find him thus
 A wand'ring exile in a foreign land ;
 In this mean garb, with wild dishevell'd hair,
 Bereft of sight, and destitute, perhaps,
 Of needful food and nourishment ; alas !
 Too late I know it, worthless as I am,
 I flew to succour him, to plead my cause,
 That not from others he might hear the tale
 Of my misfortunes ; sacred pity sits
 Fast by the throne of Jove, o'er all his works
 Presiding gracious ; O ! let her inspire
 Thy breast, my father ; crimes already done,
 Which cannot be recall'd, may still be heal'd
 By kind forgiveness ; why then art thou silent ?
 O ! speak, my father, do not turn aside ;
 Wilt thou not answer ? wilt thou let me go
 Without one word ; nor tell me whence thy wrath
 Contemptuous springs ? my sisters, you at least
 Will try to move his unrelenting heart,
 And loosen his clos'd lips, that not thus spurn'd
 And thus unanswer'd, though a suppliant here
 At Neptune's altar, I return with shame
 And foul disgrace.

ANTIGONE.

Say, wherefore didst thou come,
 My hapless brother ? tell thy mournful tale ;

Such

and well acquainted with the fiery disposition of his father, he addresses himself first to his sisters, and then slides, as it were insensibly into his modest and humble supplication, clothed in terms that must have moved any but the implacable OEdipus.

Such is the pow'r of words, that whether sweet
 They move soft pity, or when bitter urge
 To violence and wrath, at least they ope
 Th' unwilling lips, and make the silent speak.

P O L Y N I C E S.

'Tis well advis'd, and I will tell thee all.
 O ! may that deity propitious smile,
 Whose altar late I left, whence Theseus rais'd
 This wretched suppliant, and in converse free
 Mix'd gracious with me ! may I hope from you
 The like benevolence ? and now, my father,
 I'll tell thee wherefore Polynices came.
 Thou see'st me banish'd from my native land,
 Unjustly banish'd, for no other crime
 But that I strove to keep the throne of Thebes,
 By birthright mine, from him, who drove me thence,
 The young Eteocles : not his the claim
 By justice, nor to me his fame in arms
 Superior, but by soft persuasive arts
 He won the rebel city to his love.
 Thy curse, my father, was the cause of all,
 I know it was ; for so the priests declar'd
 In oracles divine : to Argos then
 I came, and to Adrastus' daughter join'd
 In marriage, gain'd the Argive chiefs, renown'd
 For martial deeds ; sev'n valiant leaders march
 To Thebes, resolv'd to conquer or to die.
 Therefore to thee, my father, came I here,
 To beg thy aid for me and these my friends,
 Companions of the war, who threaten Thebes
 With their united pow'rs, in order thus ;

The

The wise and brave Amphiaraus, or skill'd
 To cast the spear, or with prophetic tongue
 Disclose the will of heav'n, with OEneus' son
 Ætolian Tydeus, and Eteocles
 At Argos born; to these Hippomedon
 Sent by Talaus his renowned sire,
 Bold Capaneus, who threatens soon to raze
 The walls of mighty Thebes; to close the train,
 Parthenopæan Arcas comes, the son
 Of Atalantis, from her virgin name
 So call'd: with these thy hapless son, (the child
 Of dire misfortune rather) leads his force
 From Argos to rebellious Thebes; for these,
 And for their children, for the lives of all,
 Suppliant to thee we come, in humble pray'r,
 To deprecate thy wrath against a wretch
 Who, injur'd much, but seeks the vengeance due
 To a base brother, whose oppressive hand
 Hath drove me from my country and my throne;
 If there be truth in what the gods declare,
 On him shall vict'ry smile, for whom thy vows
 Shall rise propitious; therefore by our gods,
 And native fountains, O! remit thy anger,
 And smile upon me, on a banish'd man,
 A beggar like thyself, who lives like thee
 By other's bounty; in one common fate
 We are united, whilst the tyrant sits
 In ease at home, and laughs our woes to scorn.
 Yet if you wou'dst but listen to my vows,
 Soon might I cast him forth, restore thee soon

To

The wise and brave, &c. In the original, it is first Amphiaraus,
 'second Tydeus, third Eteocles, &c.' but this would have appeared
 extremely harsh and awkward in a literal translation.

C H O R U S.

OE D I P U S.

Where now thy brother sits, was thine, didst drive
Thy father hence, to penury and woe:
Now, when thou see'st me in this mean attire,
Thou weep'st my fate, because 'tis like thy own;
But I'll not weep, for I can bear it all,
Still, wicked parricide, rememb'ring thee,
The cruel cause of all; thou mad'st me thus
On others bounty to rely for food
And nourishment; for thee, I might have perish'd,
But these my pious daughters, these alone,
Beyond their sex's pow'r, with manly aid
Have cherish'd and protect'd me: for you,
Who call yourselves my sons, ye are not mine,

I know

But that the noble Theseus, &c. The curse, which OEdipus here pronounces against his sons, hath something in it very awful and terrible; especially if we consider it as spoken before an audience thoroughly convinced that the curses of offended parents were always inflicted, and the prophecies of dying men always fulfil'd. Nothing perhaps but Shakespear's Lear can exceed it.

I know you not ; though heav'n hath spar'd you long
 Death will o'ertake you ; when thy forces come
 To Thebes, which shall not fall before thy arms,
 There soon shalt thou, and thy vile brother, dye :
 Long since my curses did declare thy fate,
 Which here I do repeat, that you may learn
 The rev'rence due to parents, and no more
 Reproach a sightless father : look on these
 My duteous daughters, did they act like you ?
 They never did ; and therefore to the throne,
 Which you have forfeited, shall they succeed,
 If justice still, as she is ever wont,
 Sits at the hand of Jove : mean-time, thou worst,
 Thou most abandon'd of the race of men,
 Be gone, away, and with thee bear this curse
 Which here I do pronounce ; to Argos ne'er
 May'st thou return ! never may Thebes be thine !
 Soon may'st thou perish by a brother's hand,
 Slaying the slayer ! may dark Erebus
 Receive them both ! and now on you I call
 Ye goddesses rever'd, and thou, O ! Mars,
 Thou, who hast rais'd the bitter strife between
 My impious sons, bear witness to my words !
 Farewel : now go, and tell the Thebans, tell
 Thy faithful friends, how fair an heritage
 Your OEdipus hath here bequeath'd his children.

CHORUS.

O ! Polynices, little is the joy

Which

O ! Polynices, &c. Brumoy observes, that the more we consider this tender scene, between Polynices and his sister, the more natural, charming, and pathetic we shall find it ; the fate of every thing that has intrinsic merit, says he, is to strike us but little at first view, to improve on the second, and always to appear the more beautiful, the more we examine it.

Which we can give thee of this fatal journey;
Therefore away and leave us.

P O L Y N I C E S.

A sad path

These steps have trod indeed, of woe to me
And to my friends; was it for this, alas!
I came from Argos? I can never tell
My mournful story there, never return;
O! I must bury it in silence all.
My sisters, ye have heard the dreadful curse
Which he pronounc'd; O! if it be fulfil'd,
And some kind hand restore you back to Thebes,
At least remember me; at least perform
The fun'ral rites, and hide me in the tomb;
So shall your names, for pious tenderness
To an unhappy father long rever'd,
With added praises crown'd, exalted shine,
For this kind office to a brother's shade.

A N T I G O N E.

O! Polynices, let me beg thee, hear
Thy sister now.

P O L Y N I C E S.

My dear Antigone,

What say'st thou?

A N T I G O N E.

Lead thy armies back to Argos,
Nor thus destroy thy country and thyself.

P O L Y N I C E S.

It cannot be; my forces once dismiss'd
Through fear, what pow'r shall ever reunite them?

A N T I G O N E.

But wherefore all this rage? what canst thou hope
Of fame or profit by the fall of Thebes?

P O L Y-

POLYNICES.

'Tis base to fly, and, eldest born as I am,
To be the laughter of a younger brother.

ANTIGONE.

Dost thou not dread the oracles pronounc'd
Against you both, death by each other's hand?

POLYNICES.

I know the sentence; but we must go on.

ANTIGONE.

Alas! and who shall dare to follow thee
After this dire prediction?

POLYNICES.

None shall know it.

The prudent gen'ral tells the good alone,
And keeps the threaten'd ill unknown to all.

ANTIGONE.

Art thou determin'd then, and wilt thou go?

POLYNICES.

Do not dissuade me, for the task is mine;
And tho' a father's fatal curse attend me,
Tho' vengeful furies shall await my steps,
Yet I must go: may Jove indulgent smile
On you, my sisters, if when I am dead,
As soon I shall be, to my breathless corpse
You pay due honours! now farewell for ever,
For living ye shall ne'er again behold me.

ANTIGONE.

Alas! my brother!

POLYNICES.

Do not weep for me.

ANTIGONE.

Who wou'd not weep to see thee rushing thus
On certain death?

POLY-

OEDIPUS

SOLYNICES.

If I must dye, I must.

ANTIGONE.

Yet be persuaded.

POLYNICES.

Ask me not to do

A deed unworthy of me.

ANTIGONE.

Losing thee

I shall be most unhappy.

POLYNICES.

To the gods

Alone belongs the fate of mortals ; some

Are born to happiness, and some to woe :

You may they guard from ev'ry ill, for sure

Ye merit all the good they can bestow.

[Exit Polynices.]

SCENE III.

OEDIPUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE,

CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Fresh sorrows hath this hapless stranger brought

On me and all ; but so hath heav'n decreed,

Which nothing doth in vain ; whilst time beholds

And orders all, inflicting woe on woe :

But hark, the thunder roars : almighty Jove !

OEDIPUS.

Fresh sorrows, &c. From this place to the arrival of Theseus, the chorus in the original, being in strophe and antistrophe, was probably set to music and sung ; but as it is interrupted by the dialogue, the reasons for not throwing it into ode or rhyme in the translation are sufficiently obvious.

OE D I P U S.

My daughters, O! my daughters, who will bring
The noble Theseus here, that best of men?

A N T I G O N E.

Wherefore, my father, shou'd we call him hither?

OE D I P U S.

This winged light'ning from the arm of Jove
Must bear me to the shades below. Where's Theseus?
Let him be sent for instantly.

C H O R U S.

Again,

Another dreadful clap! it strikes my soul
With horror, and my hairs do stand an end
With fear; behold, again the lightnings flash;
I dread the consequence, for not in vain
These signs appear, of some calamity
Portentous ever: O! æthereal Jove!

OE D I P U S.

Alas! my children, nought can save me now,
The fatal hour of my departure hence
Draws nigh.

A N T I G O N E.

Why think'st thou so?

OE D I P U S.

I know it well.

Send for the king immediately.

C H O R U S.

Alas!

The thunder rolls on ev'ry side; good heav'n,
Protect us! if to this devoted land
It bodes destruction, let not ruin fall
On me; O let not that be our reward

For pitying thus a poor deserted stranger :

O ! Jove ! on thee we call, protect and save us !

OEDIPUS.

Is Theseus come, shall he once more behold me,

Whilst yet I live, and keep my perfect mind ?

CHORUS.

What secret hast thou to reveal to him ?

OEDIPUS.

I owe him much, and wou'd repay his goodness,

Ev'n as I promis'd him.

CHORUS.

O ! haste, my son ;

At Neptune's altar leave the sacrifice,

And hither fly, for OEdipus to thee

And to thy country grateful waits to pay

Thy bounties ; haste, O ! Theseus, to receive them.

SCENE IV.

THESEUS, OEDIPUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE,

CHORUS.

THESEUS.

Again this noise, this wild astonishment,

Amongst you all ! was OEdipus the cause ?

Or did the bolt of Jove, and rushing hail

Affright you ? when the god in raging storms

Descends thus dreadful, we have cause to fear.

OEDIPUS.

O ! king, thou com'st in happy hour, some god

Propitious led thee hither.

THE-

COLONEUS.

307

THESEUS.

Son of Laius,

What new event hath happen'd?

OEDIPUS.

Know, my life

At length is verging to its latest hour;
I wish to dye, but first my vows to thee,
And to this city, faithful must perform.

THESEUS.

But who hath told thee thou so soon shalt dye?

OEDIPUS.

The gods themselves, who never utter falsehood,
By signs infallible have warn'd me of it.

THESEUS.

How spake they to thee?

OEDIPUS.

In repeated thunder

And light'ning from th' all-powerful hand of Jove,

THESEUS.

I do believe thee, for thy prophecies
Were never false; but say, what must be done?

OEDIPUS.

O! son of Ægeus, I will tell thee all
The bliss reserved for thee in thy age,
For thee, and for thy country; I must go
To my appointed place, and there shall dye:
I go without a guide, nor must thou tell
To mortal ear where OEdipus doth lye,
For ever hid; O! king, that sacred place
Shall be thy sure defence, and better far
Than many a shield, or all the social aid
Of firm alliance in the field of war:
What more remains, unutterable now,

Of higher import, thither when thou com'st
 To thee alone shall be deliver'd ; nought
 Shall I reveal, or to the citizens,
 Or ev'n to these, beloved as they are,
 My pious daughters ; thou must ever keep
 The solemn secret, only when thy life
 Draws near its end, disclose it to thy son,
 Heir of thy kingdom, and to him alone :
 From king to king thus shall the tale devolve,
 And thus thy Athens be for ever safe
 From Theban force ; even the best of cities,
 Where justice rules, may swerve from virtue's laws
 And be oppressive, but the gods, tho' late,
 Will one day punish all who disobey
 Their sacred mandates ; therefore, son of *Aegeus*,
 Be careful, and be just ; but this to thee
 I need not say : quick let us to the place,
 For so the gods decree : there must I go,
 Thence never to return : come then, my daughters,
 Long have ye been my pious guides, henceforth
 I must be yours ; follow, but touch me not ;
 Let me find out the tomb where I must hide
 My poor remains ; that way my journey lies ;

[pointing with his hand.

Away : thou god of shades, great *Mercury*,
 And *Proserpine*, infernal pow'rs, conduct me !
 O ! fightless eyes, where are ye ? never more
 Shall these hands touch your unavailing orbs,
 O ! light and life, farewell ! at length I go
 To hide me in the tomb ; but O ! for thee,
 My best beloved friend, and this fair land,
 And these thy subjects, may prosperity
 Attend you still, and may you sometimes deign

Amidst

Amidst your bliss to think on EOdius !

[Exeunt.

CHORUS.

Goddeſs inviſible, on thee we call,
If thee we may invoke, Proſerpina, and thee
Great Pluto, king of ſhades, O grant
That not oppreſs'd by tort'ring pain
Beneath the ſtroke of death he linger long,
But ſwift with eaſy ſteps deſcend,

To Styx's drear abode ;

For he hath led a life of toil and pain ;

May the juſt gods repay his undeſerved woe !

Ye goddeſſes rever'd, who dwell

Beneath the earth deep hid, and thou,

Who, barking from thy gloomy cave,

Unconquer'd Cerb'rus, guard'ſt the ghòſts below,

On thee, O ! ſon of Tartarus, we call,

For thou art ever wakeful, lead, O ! lead

To thy dark manſions this unhappy ſtanger.

[Exeunt.

X 3

ACT

Goddeſs inviſible, &c. This is the fourth ſong, or intermede of the chorus, who perceiving that the death of OEdipus is unavoidable, and every moment to be expected, put up their prayers to the infernal powers for his eaſy and peaceful departure; the original conſiſts, like the other choruſſes, of ſtrophe and antiſtrophe : I have taken the liberty to throw the whole into one irregular ode, of varied meaſures without rhyme.

OEDIPUS

ACT V.

SCENE I.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MESSENGER.

O! CITIZENS, I come to tell a tale----
 But to be brief, know, OEdipus is dead.
 To speak the manner and strange circumstance
 Of his departure will require more words,
 And calls for your attention.

CHORUS.

Is he gone?

Unhappy man!

MESSENGER.

For ever hath he left

The path of life.

CHORUS.

How dy'd he? by the hand

Of heav'n dismiss'd, without disease or pain?

MES-

OEdipus is dead. The length of this description, and the number of circumstances recounted in it, seem to make it highly improbable that so many things could have happened in the short space of time allowed for them, being only from the exit of OEdipus to the entrance of the messenger. There is no way of excusing Sophocles in this particular, but by supposing that the preceding ode of the chorus being set to music, might take up a long time in the performance; perhaps the impatience of the spectator to know the catastrophe may plead still more strongly in defence of this precipitation.

MESSENGER.

O! 'twas a scene of wonder; how he left
 This place, and, self-conducted, led us on,
 Blind as he was, ye all remember well.
 Soon as he came to where the craggy steep
 With brazen steps leads to the hollow gulph,
 Where various paths unite, a place renown'd
 For the fam'd league of Theseus and his friend,
 Between Acherdus and the Thracian rock,
 On a sepulchral stone he sat him down;
 Pull'd off the filthy weeds he long had worn,
 And bade his daughters instantly prepare
 The bath and splendid garb; with hasty steps
 To Ceres' neighb'ring altar they repair
 Obedient, bring the vessel, and the robe
 Funereal; all things done, as custom bids
 For dying men, sudden a dreadful clap
 Of thunder shook the ground; the virgins trembled,
 And clinging fearful round their father's knees
 Beat their sad breasts, and wept; soon as he heard
 The sound portentous, he embrac'd his daughters:
 Children, he cry'd, your father is no more;
 No longer shall you lead a life of pain,
 No longer toil for OEdipus; alas!
 'Twas dreadful to you, but this day, my children,
 Shall end your sorrows and my life together:
 Never did father love his daughters more
 Than I have lov'd, but henceforth you must live
 Without your OEdipus; farewell for ever!

X 4

He

Q! 'twas a scene of wonder, &c. The celebrated critic Longinus takes notice, in his treatise on the sublime, of this narration of OEdipus's death, as a proof of Sophocles's peculiar excellency in the descriptive.

He spake, and long in sad embraces join'd,
 They wept aloud ; at length did clam'rous grief
 To silent sorrow yield, and all was still ;
 When suddenly we heard a voice that oft
 Repeated, ' OEdipus, why this delay ?
 ' Where art thou, OEdipus ? ' the wretched king,
 Attentive to the call of heav'n, desir'd
 That Theseus might be sent for ; Theseus came :
 When thus the dying exile ; O ! my friend,
 Give me thy hand, my daughters give him yours,
 Let this, my dearest Theseus, be the pledge
 Of amity between you, promise here
 That you will ne'er forsake my hapless children,
 But henceforth cherish, comfort, and protect them.
 The gen'rous king, in pity to their woes,
 Vow'd to perform what OEdipus desir'd :
 The father threw his feeble arms around
 His weeping children, you, he cry'd, must learn
 To bear your suff'rings with an equal mind,
 And leave this place ; for not to mortal eye
 Is giv'n to see my future fate ; away ;
 Theseus alone must stay, and know it all.
 This did we hear him utter as we stood
 Attentive ; when his duteous daughters left him,
 And went their way ; we wept, and follow'd them ;
 Soon we return'd, but OEdipus was gone ;
 The king, alone remaining, as if struck
 With terror at some dreadful spectacle,
 Had with his hand o'er-veil'd his downcast eye ;
 A little after we beheld him bend
 In humble adoration to the earth,
 And then to heav'n prefer his ardent pray'r :
 How the poor exile perish'd none can tell

But

But Theseus ; nor the fiery blast of Jove
 Destroy'd, nor sea o'erwhelm'd him, but from heav'n
 Some messenger divine did snatch him hence,
 Or pow'r infernal bade the pitying earth
 Open her peaceful bosom to receive him ;
 Without a groan, disease, or pain he fell :
 'Twas wondrous all ; to those, who credit not
 This strange report, I answer, 'tis most true.

CHORUS.

Where are his daughters, with their weeping friends
 Who follow'd them ?

MESSENGER.

They cannot be far off ;
 The voice of grief I hear proclaims them nigh.

SCENE II.

ANTIGONE, ISMENE, with Attendants,
 MESSENGER, CHORUS.

ANTIGONE.

Alas ! the time is come when we must weep
 Our father's fate, the fate of all his race
 Long since unhappy ; various were the toils,
 The labours we endur'd, but this is far,
 Far above all, unutterable woe.

CHORUS.

What is it ?

ANTIGONE.

O ! it cannot be conceiv'd.

CHORUS.

Is he then dead ?

A N-

ANTIGONE.

He is : his death was strange

And wonderful ; for not in war he fell,
Nor did the sea o'erwhelm him, but the earth
Hath hid him from us ; deadly night hath clos'd
Our eyes in sadness ; whether o'er the seas
We roam, or exiles in a foreign land
Lead our sad days, we must be still unhappy :
Alas ! I only wish I might have dy'd
With my poor father ; wherefore shou'd I ask
For longer life ?

CHORUS.

Ye good and pious daughters,
Remember, what the will of heav'n decrees
With patience we must bear ; indulge not then
Excess of grief ; your fate hath not deserv'd it.

ANTIGONE.

O ! I was fond of misery with him ;
Ev'n what was most unlovely grew belov'd,
When he was with me. O ! my dearest father,
Beneath the earth now in deep darkness hid,
Worn as thou wert with age, to me thou still
Wert dear, and shalt be ever.

CHORUS.

Now his course

Is finish'd.

ANTIGONE.

Even as he wish'd he dy'd
In a strange land, for such was his desire ;
A shady turf cover'd his lifeless limbs ;
Nor unlamented fell ; for O ! these eyes,
My father, still shall weep for thee, nor time
E'er blot thee from my memory.

ISMENE.

Alas!

Alas! my sister, what must be our fate,
 Forlorn and helpless, of our father thus
 Bereft?

CHORUS.

His end was happy, therefore cease
 Your fruitless tears: from sorrow none is free.

ANTIGONE.

Let us be gone.

ISMENE.

But where?

ANTIGONE.

I wish-----

ISMENE.

O! what?

ANTIGONE.

To see the tomb.

ISMENE.

Whose tomb?

ANTIGONE.

Our father's: oh!

ISMENE.

But is it lawful? know'st thou that?

ANTIGONE.

Why thus

Reprove me, my Ismene?

ISMENE.

He is yet

Unbury'd, and without-----

ANTIGONE.

O! lead me there,

Then

Then kill me if thou wilt; for where, alas!

Can I betake me?

CHORUS.

Friends, be comforted.

ANTIGONE.

Where shall I fly?

CHORUS.

Thou hast already scap'd
Unnumber'd ills.

ANTIGONE.

I'm thinking, my Ismene----

ISMENE.

What think'st thou?

ANTIGONE.

How we shall get home.

CHORUS.

No more;

Thou hast been long familiar with affliction.

ANTIGONE.

My life hath ever been a life of pain

And sorrow, but this far exceeds them all.

CHORUS.

The storm beats hard upon you:

ANTIGONE.

O! it doth.

CHORUS.

I know it must.

ANTIGONE.

O! whither shall we fly?

Great Jove! what hope remains?

CHORUS.

Suppress your griefs;

We

We shou'd not weep for those who wish'd to dye,
And meet their fate with pleasure; 'tis not just
Nor lawful to lament them.

SCENE III.

THESEUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

ANTIGONE.

Son of Ægeus,

Suppliant to thee we come.

THESEUS.

What wou'd ye of me?

ANTIGONE.

Permit us but to see our father's tomb.

THESEUS.

It is not lawful.

ANTIGONE.

O! what say'st thou, king?

THESEUS.

Know, pious virgins, OEdipus himself
Forbade that any shou'd approach his tomb;
That sacred spot, which he possesses there,
No mortal must profane: to me, he said,
If careful I perform'd his last command,
Shou'd joy and safety come, with victory
And peace to Athens; this your gods did hear,
Confirmed by the sacred oath of Jove.

ANTIGONE.

If such our father's will, we must submit;
But O! permit us to revisit Thebes,

That

That so we may prevent th' impending fate
Of our dear brothers.

THESEUS.

All that you request,
Or may be grateful to that honour'd shade,
Whose mem'ry we revere, I freely grant ;
For I must not be weary of my task.

CHORUS.

Remember, virgins, to repress your sorrows,
And cease your fruitless grief ; for know, 'tis all
Decreed by fate, and all the work of heav'n.

F I N I S.

